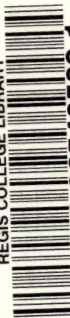


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# VAIN FEARS

THAT KEEP YOU FROM FREQUENT  
COMMUNION WITH OUR LORD

INSTRUCTIONS USEFUL FOR ALL,  
EVEN FOR CONFESSORS.

*FROM THE ITALIAN OF*  
S. ANTONI, S.T.D., MISSIONARY APOSTOLIC

COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.  
BIB. MAJOR  
TORONTO

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LETTER OF  
**His Eminence Cardinal Gennari**  
TO THE AUTHOR.

VERY REVEREND SIR,

It was only yesterday evening that I had an opportunity to present to the Holy Father the copies of your little work on frequent Communion.

His Holiness not only welcomed it, but still more, he always rejoices over such a publication, being well persuaded of its necessity and of the immense utility that frequent and daily Communion will procure to the Faithful.

In thanking you for your gracious gift, the Holy Father expressed the wish that the little book may spread largely among the Faithful and help to excite in them a lively desire for this Nourishment of Eternal Life. Meanwhile, His Holiness sends to the author and his work the Apostolic Benediction.

Happy to be able to transmit to you encouragement so precious, I thank you at the same time for the little books which you were pleased to destine for me. I remain in sentiments of esteem and very special consideration, Very Reverend Sir,

Your very devoted servant,

CASIMIR CARD. GENNARI.

Rome, July 10th, 1904.

## Preface

OF THE SECOND ITALIAN EDITION.

(June, 1905.)

ALTHOUGH this humble little work has no need of any recommendation, after being honoured by that of His Holiness Pius X., I shall, however, remark that it has received besides, the eulogium of several Reviews and religious Journals.

Let us quote two passages from the most authorised Reviews. The *Monitore Ecclesiastico* says: "By its solid doctrine and convincing arguments, it destroys the objections that ordinarily arise against daily Communion, that true Nourishment of Life, and Sovereign Antidote of the soul. This precious book ought to be found not only in the hands of all the Faithful, but still more in those of all confessors and pastors of souls."

The *Civiltà Cattolica* thus expresses itself:

"The worthy author has already treated the same subject in two other little works recommended in these pages at the time. He now presents us with this third, which can boast a much higher approbation than ours, since there is question of that of our Holy Father Pius X., who, having received from the author the homage of some copies, sent to him a message through His Eminence Cardinal Gennari:

"*The Holy Father expressed the wish that the little book may spread largely among the Faithful, and help to*

*excite in them a lively desire for this Nourishment of Eternal Life. Meantime, His Holiness sends to the author and his work the Apostolic Benediction.'*

"We hope this little book may be useful to all, even to confessors, for they would have difficulty in finding elsewhere certain doubts analysed with more care and more happily solved."

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION (1904).

"It is, above all, necessary to labour at re-establishing in the Catholic world the custom of daily Communion. The example of the early Church, the Decrees of Councils, the authority of the Popes and of saints of all ages, teach us that, like the body, the soul has need of frequent nourishment, and its most strengthening food is the Divine Eucharist.

"The prejudice of those that are hostile to this doctrine, the vain fears of a great number, the pretexts alleged for abstaining from It, must be entirely eradicated. There is, in fact, question of a devotion more than any other useful to the Christian people, whether to snatch the present generations from the pursuit of perishable goods, or to rouse and entertain Christian sentiments that will last."

Animated by these authorised words of the wise Pontiff, Leo XIII., of glorious memory, I published two little books on Holy Communion.

It has pleased Divine goodness to bless my modest labours, as I may be permitted to infer from the encouragement I received from their Eminences, the

<sup>1</sup> Leo XIII. Encyclical Letter on the Holy Eucharist. May 28th, 1902.

Cardinals (among them Cardinal Sarto, now Pius X.) and from many Bishops, also from the rapid diffusion of the works and the fruit they have already produced, I readily give this new effort to the public.

Resting on the authority of the Fathers of the Church, of St. Thomas and St. Alphonsus Liguori, I have endeavoured to answer the objections of timid souls, to banish their vain fears, and indirectly to destroy the fatal prejudices of adversaries. Such fears and such fatal prejudices remove from the Holy Table many good Christians who might worthily communicate frequently and even daily.

The work that I have accomplished, so dear to the heart of a priest, has been a delight to me. "Charged by Christ Himself with the mission to celebrate and distribute the mysteries of His Body and Blood, priests can do nothing better to acknowledge the great honour that they have received than to promote by every means the Eucharistic glory of Christ, and, conformably to the desires of His Sacred Heart, to invite and urge all souls to the life-giving sources of a Sacrifice and a Sacrament so august."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*—The perusal of the Encyclical will go far to dissipate vain fears and prejudices. With all our heart, we unite with the fervent and pious zeal of the learned Author for the glory of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

May the Mother of Divine Love, who is fully initiated into the secret of the marvellous union of the soul with the Adorable Heart of Our Lord, enlighten souls, especially priests, religious, and all educators of youth, upon the doctrine contained in this little work, confirmed so opportunely by the Decree of Pius X. ! May they see how it offers to all, to the tepid and sinful, as well as to the perfect, a new and immense grace of definitive conversion and sanctification ! May its teaching spread abroad everywhere as a plentiful effusion of love and mercy ! (*Translator's Note.*)

## To the Christian Soul.

See, Christian soul, whether daily Communion is not the ardent desire of the Heart of Jesus.

He has chosen as a symbol of the Divine Eucharist the manna,<sup>1</sup> that mysterious and daily nourishment of the Hebrew people in the desert.<sup>2</sup> He instituted It "to be the spiritual nourishment of souls, the antidote of daily sins,"<sup>3</sup> and under the appearance of bread,<sup>4</sup> our ordinary and daily food. He invites us expressly to nourish ourselves with the "Living Bread come down from heaven."<sup>5</sup> He has taught us in the Lord's Prayer to ask for It daily, calling It "our daily bread."<sup>6</sup> In fine, the Church, the infallible interpreter of the desires of Her Divine Spouse, makes known to us in every way<sup>7</sup> how much she desires her children to communicate daily.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus Christ loves us to the point of being willing to give Himself to us every day, because He wishes to enrich us with His most precious graces and to deify us by union with and transformation into Himself.

But why do so few souls approach the Divine Banquet frequently or daily?

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Council of Trent, sess. xviii., ch. ii.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvi. 26.

<sup>5</sup> John vi. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xi. 3.

<sup>7</sup> The Fathers. . . . The Council of Trent. . . . St. Denis the Areopagite. . . . *De Hierarchia eccl.*, ch. xiii.

<sup>8</sup> The Decree of Pius X. is a solemn confirmation of the desire of the Church on this point. (*Translator's Note.*)



Some, unhappily, are prevented by mortal sin, which separates them from Him who "is the life."<sup>1</sup> It is with good reason that they recognise themselves unworthy of Holy Communion, since to communicate in such a state would be horrible sacrilege.

Others live in grace ; but, absorbed in the things of earth, loving our Lord but little, they prefer to remain in their tepidity, they do not desire to become more fervent by approaching often, still less every day, to the Flame of Love, which is Jesus Christ !

Others, in fine, love Him and would be happy to receive Him often, even daily, in the Sacrament, and ever to increase in His love. But they dare not do so because of certain prejudices and vain fears which prevent their approach to the Holy Table.

It is to you that I especially address my words. O timid fearful soul ! It is for you that I have written this little book. Frankly lay open to me your difficulties and receive the response with a docile heart. While reading invoke from time to time the Holy Ghost. You will be enlightened, reassured, and you will go with delight to daily Communion, which will soon become all your life and happiness.

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 25.



# The Fear of Communicating Unworthily.

1. *I do not communicate daily nor even frequently, because I am afraid of communicating unworthily.*

I pity you, Christian soul, who experience this difficulty. You feel the force of St. Paul's words: "Who-soever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord"<sup>1</sup> . . . "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."<sup>2</sup>

I ask you, in the first place: Why do you fear communicating unworthily by receiving the Body of the Lord daily or frequently, when such fear is unknown to those who rarely communicate, and even by those that do so only at Easter? Can it be that the Apostle has fulminated this sentence only against souls that approach frequently and daily to the Holy Table, and not against those, also, that communicate rarely and even only once a year. It seems to me that it aims rather at the latter; for one Communion being a preparation for the next, it is much less difficult for him who communicates rarely to render himself guilty of sacrilege rather than him who habitually approaches the Holy Table.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 29.

I add that this fear is vain and the effect of prejudice. Do you know clearly what is *necessary* in order not to make an unworthy and sacrilegious Communion? To communicate worthily, even daily, behold what is necessary and sufficient—it is necessary and sufficient that, if you are *certain* of having committed a mortal sin since your last confession, you have not the hardihood to communicate without going again to confession, even if it seems to you that you have contrition.

This teaching is not mine, nor of such and such a theologian, but, indeed, of our Holy Mother Church. United in the holy Council of Trent, she manifested on one side her ardent desire to see all the faithful who assisted at Holy Mass communicate sacramentally,<sup>1</sup> and, on the other she says: “That so august a Sacrament may not be unworthily received, and thus cause the death and condemnation of him who receives It, the Council decides and declares that they who are certain of having committed a mortal sin, however repentant they may be, must necessarily recur to sacramental confession before approaching the Holy Table.”<sup>2</sup>

Behold, then, O Christian soul, all that is *necessary* that you may not commit a sacrilege in communicating. And that only is *necessary*. Do you understand? Never communicate without confessing beforehand, if you are certain, that is, if you can *swear* to being in a state of mortal sin.

You ask me: “Is that alone sufficient not to make a sacrilegious Communion?” Yes, that is sufficient, because, as the learned Suarez observes: “Nothing

<sup>1</sup> Sess. xxi., cap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Sess. xiii., Cap. viii., Can. ii.

## The Fear of Communicating Unworthily. 13

more is imposed on us by any Council or Pope, nor by any of the Holy Fathers.”<sup>1</sup> Now, if this is so, why do you say: “I do not communicate daily, nor even frequently, because I fear to make unworthy and sacrilegious Communions?” Why not despise this fear as vain? “As you have no affection for mortal sin, or, having the certitude of having committed it, you have confessed and repented, nothing hinders you from communicating worthily every day.”<sup>2</sup>

*2. I do not communicate every day, nor very often, because I fear committing some venial sin even in the very act of Holy Communion through a want of actual devotion.*

Ah, Christian soul, this fear does not displease me, and I confess that I bless God for it with all my heart. “If it is proper to avoid the least faults in the discharge of every sacred function, with how much more reverence and holiness should we approach the august Sacrament of the Altar?”<sup>3</sup>

We ought, then, to think of manifesting our sentiments by a modest and recollected attitude before the sweet Jesus, who comes to us with so much love, and we ought carefully to shun at this moment anything that could offend Him. And this so much the more since “the effect of this Sacrament is not only the increase of sanctifying grace—an effect which is always

<sup>1</sup> In III. Part divi. Thomæ, q. lxxix., Art. S. disput. 63, sec. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Niholas I. Resp. ad. Bulg. ch. ix.

<sup>3</sup> Council of Trent, Sess. xiii. C. vii.

produced when we communicate without the certainty of being in a state of mortal sin—but still more a certain actual refection of spiritual sweetness, of which they deprive themselves who are guilty of venial sin even in the very reception of the Sacrament. In this case, however, they still receive an increase of grace and charity.”<sup>1</sup> He, on the contrary, who communicates without committing any little fault of indevotion, “receives in its plenitude the effect of the Sacrament.”<sup>2</sup>

But if I approve a fear that inspires more reverence and devotion for the Divine Eucharist, I disapprove, however, when it hinders you from communicating often or every day. In this case it would become for you a vain fear. What is necessary in order not to commit a fault, even a light one, of irreverence and indevotion in the act of the Communion? All that is necessary, St. Thomas teaches us, is that at that moment we have no voluntary distractions,<sup>3</sup> by thinking deliberately of worldly things, but that we keep our attention fixed on Jesus, receiving Him with modesty and reverence.

I say that we should have no voluntary distractions by thinking deliberately of worldly things, because if at this moment there should come distractions that we in no wise desire, they would not be sinful and would hinder neither reverence nor devotion; on the contrary, not wished, but borne with patience and offered to God, they would be an increase of both the one and the other, and would render the Communion more meritorious.

And now, answer me, Christian soul. Would you

<sup>1</sup> S. Thom. IIIa. P., lxxix., Art. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

approach the altar with irreverence and immodesty? Would you deliberately indulge a distraction at the solemn moment in which the priest, holding in his hands the Immaculate Host, carries It to your lips while pronouncing the words: "May the Body of Jesus Christ guard your soul to eternal life! Amen!" If at that instant of paradise, there should come to you against your will some distraction, would you not chase it from your mind instead of consenting to it?<sup>1</sup>

Do you not see now that your fear is chimerical? Despise it as a temptation of Satan, and fail not to communicate daily.

Think that "the enemy, well knowing all the fruit and the efficacious remedy found in Holy Communion, tries in every way and on every occasion to turn away faithful souls from It and to keep them as far from It as he can."<sup>2</sup>

*3. I do not communicate every day, nor even frequently, because I have great temptations. As they torment me when I am going to communicate on the morrow, and even at the very reception of the Sacrament, the fear of communicating unworthily restrains me.*

Let us examine this difficulty in its several lights.

In the first place, you do not communicate every

<sup>1</sup> This supposition of voluntary distraction in the very act of communicating with a "pious and right intention," is so improbable that the Decree does not even mention it. (*Translator's Note.*)

<sup>2</sup> *Imitation of Jesus Christ.* Book iv., ch. x., i.



day, nor even frequently, on account of the great temptations that assail you.

I reply : Precisely because Satan prowls around you like a roaring lion tempting you against faith, purity, etc., you have all the more need, by frequent and daily Communion, to "put on the armour of God that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil."<sup>1</sup> In effect, this Sacrament being a sign of the Passion of Christ, by whom the demons have been vanquished, It triumphs over all his assaults.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, St. Chrysostom says : "When we have participated in the Divine Banquet, we become terrible to the demons as lions breathing flame."<sup>3</sup>

If, then, in spite of your frequent, and even daily, Communion, Satan does not desist from tempting you, will he not attack you with still greater fury should you abstain from a Sacrament which is so dreaded by him ?

But you say, my temptations attack me with redoubled violence on the eve of my Communions and even at the moment of receiving the Holy Eucharist. —I believe what you say, and I am not astonished at it. The demon, well knowing the effects of the Holy Eucharist, fears you after you have fed on that Divine Food ; hence, his rage and his efforts to keep you away from the "living Bread come down from heaven,"<sup>4</sup> the pledge of our victories, and the cause of his own defeats.

See, O Christian soul, with what good reason the author of the golden book of the *Imitation of Christ* says : "When some are disposed to prepare themselves

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. vi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> S. Thom. IIIa. P., qu. lxix., Art. 6.

<sup>3</sup> In *Joan*, hom. 45.

<sup>4</sup> John vi., 51.



for the Sacred Communion, they suffer the worst assaults and illusions of Satan. That wicked spirit himself, as it is written in Job, cometh among the sons of God to trouble them with his accustomed malice, or to make them over-fearful and perplexed ; that so he may diminish their devotion, or, by his assault, take away their faith, if haply they may altogether forbear Communion, or approach with tepidity,"<sup>1</sup> that is, by neglecting to combat their distractions.

And you, O Christian soul, would you by yielding to his perfidious suggestions abandon daily Communion? Woe to you if you realise the desires of your implacable enemy! On the contrary: "Not the least regard must be paid to his wiles and suggestions, be they ever so shameful and abominable ; for all such imaginations are to be turned back upon his own head. The wretch must be contemned and scorned ; nor is Holy Communion to be omitted on account of any assault and commotions which he may awaken."<sup>2</sup>

Again, you say : "I am afraid to communicate badly, by approaching the Holy Table in the midst of temptations so violent."—I reply that your fear is not only *vain*, but still more, *diabolical*. A *vain* fear, for what are the most horrible temptations if we do not wish them, if we endure them against our will? Are they sins? Quite the contrary, they are for **us** an increase of grace and merit.

And it is by communicating with this increase of grace and merit that you fear to do so unworthily? O what a *vain* fear! what a chimerical fear! You may fear to communicate unworthily only when you are

<sup>1</sup> Lib. iv. ch. x., 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

certain, that is, when you can swear that you have consented to these grave temptations, and that you are thereby in the state of mortal sin.

Still more, it is a *diabolical* fear, for, I repeat : "The enemy, knowing the very great fruit and remedy contained in the Holy Communion, striveth by every method and occasion, as far as he is able, to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout souls from It."<sup>1</sup>

Christian soul, turn indignantly against the tempter and say to him : "Begone, unclean spirit ! Be ashamed, miserable wretch ! Most unclean art thou to suggest such things in my ears ! Depart from me, thou most wicked seducer, thou shalt have no part in me. But Jesus (whom I desire to receive daily in spite of thee) will be with me as a valiant warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded. I prefer to die, and to undergo any torment whatsoever, rather than consent to thee. Hold thy peace and be silent. I will hear thee no further, although thou many times molest me. The Lord (who daily nourishes me with His immaculate Flesh) is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear ? If armies should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. The Lord (whom in Communion I daily press to my breast) is my helper and my Redeemer."<sup>2</sup>

4. *If in my past confessions I have forgotten certain mortal sins, am I obliged to go to confession again before Holy Communion, in order to communicate worthily ?*

No, Christian soul. Only he who in confession

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. III., ch. VI. 4, *Imitation* ; Ps. XXVI. ; I. 3 ; Ps. XVII., 15.

wilfully conceals a *certain* mortal sin commits a grave sacrilege, and the other mortal sins of which he accuses himself are not forgiven. On the contrary, the mortal sins forgotten are all indirectly remitted by sacramental absolution. When the minister of the Lord pronounces these words : *Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis*, he has not only the intention of remitting the faults of which you have just accused yourself, but those also of which you have no remembrance. And should he not have this intention, yet in virtue of the Divine Blood flowing upon you by absolution, not only are you cleansed from the sins you have declared, but even of those that have escaped your memory. There is, therefore, no obligation to confess again before presenting yourself at the Holy Table, nor even of making the act of contrition for the mortal sins forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

I am always astonished to see a doctrine so clear and evident appear new to many when I explain it at the end of the missions, in order to render less frequent, at least, these returns to the confessional before the general Communion.

I remember among others a priest who, although well instructed, appeared almost scandalised at the foregoing teaching, and I had trouble in convincing him of its truth. It is, therefore, the teaching of a Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus de Liguori. He declares it "absolutely conformable to reason,"<sup>2</sup> and says in his *Confessore diretto*: "He who, after confession, remembers some sin omitted through forgetfulness, is not bound to confess before communicating. It suffices for him to declare it at his next confession."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Alph. *Theol. Mor.*, lib. VI. n. 257.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Cap. XIV., p. 2, n. 10.

Could the holy Doctor speak more clearly? Then, Christian soul, when you perceive that you have forgotten a mortal sin, make, nevertheless, your Communion in peace and tranquility of spirit, not only once, but, for the same reason, several times and even every day, without presenting yourself anew to the confessor.

I do not say—understand me—that it would not be better to reconcile yourself before Communion if you have an *opportunity*. No, for every sacramental absolution received with good dispositions purifies the soul in the Blood of Jesus Christ. I say only this: first, you are not in the least obliged to it; secondly, you ought to be at peace, not going anew to your confessor for mortal sins forgotten, especially when you see him very much occupied hearing confessions, and, above all, when there is an extraordinary crowd of people. That is the time to despise as *vain* the fear of communicating unworthily.

5. *What prevents my communicating often and daily is the fear of always making a bad confession.*

How many good, but timid, souls are pursued by this fear, which keeps them away from Holy Communion?

Tell me, Christian soul, what is necessary for making a good confession? Two things only are *necessary* and *sufficient*: that the confession be *integral* and accompanied by the *required contrition*; that is, that the penitent have real sorrow for all his mortal sins, or that by the grace of God being free from mortal sin, he



## The Fear of Communicating Unworthily. 21

repent of some venial sin in order not to make his confession null. Remark, there is no question of *feeling* sorrow for sins, the *sentiment* not being at all necessary ;<sup>1</sup> there is question only of detesting them, of regretting having committed them.

That the confession should be *integral* means that the penitent must not through shame conceal some certain mortal sin that is present to his memory during his accusation. I say some *certain mortal* sin, because if shame made him omit venial sins, his confession would not be bad, and he would not commit a sacrilege. Why? Because if it is better to accuse one's self of them, since the Council of Trent teaches us "that it is useful to confess them,"<sup>2</sup> nevertheless, there is no obligation to do so, since the same council adds that "we can pass them over without becoming guilty of the least fault."<sup>3</sup>

But for many reasons, Christian soul (unless your confessor judges you scrupulous), I counsel you never to pass over in silence, especially through shame, *doubtful* sins, that is, those that raise a doubt in your mind as to whether they are mortal or venial. If, however, you have omitted one through shame, the Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus, declares that even in this case, you have made a good confession and have not committed a sacrilege, "since the Council of Trent does not oblige penitents to more than the accusation of the mortal sins of which they are conscious." It does not say "as they are in their conscience," that is, either as *certain* or *doubtful*, but it says: of which they are

<sup>1</sup> St. Alph., *Theol. mor.* lib. VI. n. 433.

<sup>2</sup> Sess. XIV., cap. V.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

*conscious*, which necessarily implies the exact discernment of the sin."<sup>1</sup>

And now answer me, Christian soul, you who so fear to offend the Lord: If you had the misfortune to commit a mortal sin, would you dare to confess without detesting it, without repenting of it? And being *certain* of having committed it, would you through shame or malice pass it over in silence?

Such a thought fills you with horror, does it not? To render yourself gravely culpable, your eyes open . . . to conceive no regret, no sorrow for it. . . . Knowingly to conceal this mortal sin from your confessor, and thus to commit a horrible sacrilege! . . . Your whole being trembles at the thought!

You now understand, do you not, how *vain* is this *fear* that pursues you of making bad confessions? Despite these chimerical terrors. Communicate joyously and peacefully, fully persuaded that your confessions are always good.

6. *I do not communicate often, nor every day, because I committed so many mortal sins in the past, and I am afraid of not having confessed them as I should have done.*

I understand! You are one of those souls that are never at peace, that spend their life in doubt and anxiety, whom the confessor only with the greatest trouble can press on to frequent and daily Communion.

You say: "I am constrained by numberless mortal sins in my past life!" I reply: So much the more

<sup>1</sup> *Theol. mor. lib. VI., n. 474*



## The Fear of Communicating Unworthily. 23

reason for communicating as often as possible, even every day!—How is that?—First of all, having so greatly offended the loving Heart of Jesus, it is only right that you should now be eager to gratify Its lively desire to unite Itself with you daily.

Secondly, if your sins have been pardoned as to the guilt, who knows how long a time you may have to expiate them in purgatory? Now—mark it well!—this debt is remitted more or less, and even totally, by means of frequent and daily Communion. The Angel of the Schools teaches us<sup>1</sup> that an indirect effort of Communion is to remit the punishment of past sins and to deliver us from all or a part of our purgatory by the actual awakening in our soul of holy charity, which, being a “consuming fire,”<sup>2</sup> destroys not only the guilt, but even the punishment of sin.

Ah! let not your past mortal sins keep you from the Holy Table! May they, on the contrary, draw you to it! The more you have wounded the Heart of our good Jesus, the greater is the compensation that you owe Him, and the best and sweetest way of offering it to Him is by multiplying your fervent Communions.

But you still hesitate, and why?—“I fear not having confessed as I should have done and, consequently, of not having received forgiveness.” Are you *certain* of this. Since you have no certitude on this point, since you cannot *swear to it*—you are so timid, so delicate of conscience—hold on to this decision of St. Alphonsus, that your confessions have been well made, and so, you have only to be at peace and remain tranquil.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Thom. IIIa. P., q. LXXIX., art 5.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Theol. mor. lib. VI. n. 478. The True Spouse of Christ, chap. XVIII., sec. 1.—Confessore diretto, cap. XV., p. 3. n. 17.*

Put away, also, all thought of general confessions. "They are," says the same Doctor,<sup>1</sup> "necessary *only* for him who is *certain* of having made sacrilegious confessions"—and surely you have not done that.

General confessions may be useful or necessary to those souls who pass their life between confessions and mortal sins, mortal sins and confession. To you who navigate so painfully in a sea of doubts, anxiety, and apprehension, it would be hurtful and, far from procuring you peace, it would bring you rather an increase of trouble and inquietude. Your confessor has, doubtless, told you this more than once.

"But," you insist, "supposing a case in which, without having certainty, I have, nevertheless, made my confession badly, either from want of contrition, or from not having accused myself of all my mortal sins, or from not having sufficiently explained them, what ought I to do?" According to the teaching of all theologians, this is the way it would stand with you: The last absolution received would remit not only the mortal sins committed since your last confession, but still more, it would remit *indirectly* those of your whole life without your having to renew the accusation. Thus with regard to that sin, you would leave the confessional as pure as the newly baptised. O, my Jesus, how good Thou art! How great are Thy mercies!

Be, then, at rest, Christian soul, go not back to the past, but run joyously to your Saviour, who is inclining toward you with so much love after restoring to your soul its pristine beauty, "washing it in His Blood"<sup>2</sup> by sacramental absolution.

<sup>1</sup> *Theol. mor.* lib. VI., n. 505.

<sup>2</sup> *Apoc.* I., 5.

7. *If I have not the certainty of having committed mortal sin, but if I have always a doubt about it, may I worthily communicate without again confessing?*

I know, soul so good, but so timorous, that the fear of being in the state of mortal sin often makes you omit Communion. I repeat you will have communicated worthily even if you do so with the doubt. In the first place, because to souls like you, fearing God, having a delicate conscience, and who habitually are in a state of never wishing to commit a grave sin, St. Alphonsus teaches that the *doubt alone* of having mortally sinned, is a certain sign that they have not sinned, and he applies to them these words of Our Lord to St. Teresa : "No one loses Me" (by mortal sin) "*without knowing it for certain.*"<sup>1</sup>

In the second place, because the Council of Trent has not interdicted the Holy Communion, rarely, frequently, or daily, to those that *doubt*, but only to those that are *certain*, that are conscious of having committed a mortal sin.<sup>2</sup> This is also the teaching of St. Alphonsus : "If the person is in *doubt* as to having sinned, mortally or not, he may lawfully approach the Holy Table without confessing, let the doubt be negative or positive, that is, whether there is or is not a serious reason for the doubt. More surely to receive the fruit of the Sacrament, it suffices to make the act of contrition ; for the prescription of the Apostle : "*Probet autem seipsum homo*—Let a man prove himself," by which we understand that confession is commanded, binds only,

<sup>1</sup> *Theol. mor.* lib. VI., n. 476,

<sup>2</sup> Sess. XIII., cap. VII. et VIII., can. 11.

so the Council of Trent tells us, those that are *conscious*, that is to say, *certain* of a mortal sin committed and not yet confessed. "No one," declares the Council, "if he is conscious of mortal sin, ought to approach the Eucharist."<sup>1</sup> "The precept of the Apostle, then, is imposed only on him who has consciousness, that is, who is *certain* of his sin."<sup>2</sup>

You ask whether, at least in this case, it would not be *better* to confess before communicating.

I answer: It is evidently *better*, if you are not scrupulous, and if you can conveniently find your confessor. But if you cannot easily approach the tribunal of penance, and there is question of communicating with the doubt of being in the state of mortal sin or of deferring the Holy Communion, then the *better* for you is to communicate with such a doubt rather than remain for even a single day without receiving the Blessed Sacrament.

Lastly, Christian soul, if your confessor, judging you scrupulous, has commanded you always to communicate even when *you doubt* or fear being in a state of mortal sin, not only do you do *better* to communicate in spite of this doubt, but in this case, you would be obliged to do so. And if, on account of your doubt, you omitted Holy Communion, you would displease your sweet Saviour, as St. Alphonsus teaches: "Many theologians say that a scrupulous person, who has received from his confessor an order to act freely and to rise above his scruples, not only *may* do so, but he is *obliged* to do so; otherwise, he sins as much on account of the injury he does himself by rendering himself incapable of advanc-

<sup>1</sup> Sess. XIII., cap. VII.

<sup>2</sup> *Homo apostolicus*, tract XV., cap. III., punct. 2, n. 34.



ing in the ways of God, as on account of the risk to his health, his mind, and even his soul, by relaxing his efforts and falling into vices,"<sup>1</sup> that is, by abandoning himself in despair to a guilty life.

Do you understand this, Christian soul? Although you should commit but one venial sin in disobeying your confessor, who commands you to communicate every day whatever be the doubt that agitates your soul, why would you commit that light fault by omitting Communion? Come, then, courage! and "every time that your spiritual Father grants you Communion, beware of allowing yourself to be vanquished by the demon, by omitting it on account of your fears and scruples. And know that there is no disobedience more pernicious than that of omitting Communion, because it is disobedience that proceeds from a want of humility, since you think yourself wiser in that point than your director."<sup>2</sup>

Obey, then, Christian soul, obey and say with the great St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: "*I would rather die than lose a Communion granted me by obedience.*"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, chap. XVIII., sec. 2, §. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, sec. 3, n. 6 and 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

# The Want of Time and Weekly Confession.

1 *To communicate frequently and daily, weekly confession is necessary, and I have not the time for that.*

Who ever taught you, Christian soul, that to communicate frequently and daily, it was necessary to confess every eight days? No Father, no Doctor, no theologian has ever said it, and the Church has never imposed it. On the contrary, when the Council of Trent was in session, she manifested her ardent desire to see all her children nourishing themselves daily<sup>1</sup> with the "Bread of Life."<sup>2</sup> "She does not oblige them to prepare for their Communion by sacramental confession, unless they are *certain* of having sinned mortally."<sup>3</sup> So that, strictly speaking, the Church does not forbid daily Communion to him that has not committed mortal sin even if he does not go to confession once a year, since, as St. Alphonsus teaches,<sup>4</sup> the precept of annual confession is made only for those who are *certain* of having sinned mortally.

Whence comes, then, this baneful and fatal prejudice that worthily to communicate every day, weekly confession is *necessary*? Was it the usage of the primitive

<sup>1</sup> Sess. XXII., cap. VI.

<sup>2</sup> John VI., 48,

<sup>3</sup> Sess. XIII., cap. VII.

<sup>4</sup> *Theol. mor.*, lib. VI., 667.



Church? No, certainly! The early Christians, perfectly instructed by the holy Fathers, knew very well that, to communicate worthily, confession is *necessary* only for those that are *conscious* or *certain* of having committed a mortal sin. As to venial faults, it is counselled to say before Communion only the words of the *Pater Noster*: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us."<sup>1</sup> Hence St. Alphonsus writes: "Down to the eighth century, the usage was to confess *only mortal sins*."<sup>2</sup> The pious and learned Frassinetti says: "I wish we could reflect sometimes that, among the first Christians, the more frequent the Communion, the more rare the sacramental confessions. As a general thing, they confessed only when they had fallen into some mortal sin, as all theologians commonly observe."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps, this prejudice has come to us from some other ascetic? No, because if all ascetic theologians have said, following the teaching of the Church, that the confession of venial sins is *useful*, not one of them has ever declared it *necessary* for communicating worthily. They never could have advanced such an opinion without placing themselves in opposition to the teaching of the Church, expressed by the Council of Trent.<sup>4</sup>

What, then, can be the origin of this prejudice? As for myself, I maintain that it came from hell under the inspiration of Satan. It made special use of its dear and faithful allies, the Jansenists, to popularise it and render almost morally impossible frequent and daily Communion. "It is Jansenism," says the illustrious

<sup>1</sup> S. Augustine, tr. 26 upon S. John.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessore diretto*, cap. XXI., p. 3, n. 32, Ed. Marietti tom. IX., p. 777.

<sup>3</sup> *Diss. sopra la comunione quotidiana*, n. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Sess. XIII., cap. VII. ; Sess. XIV., cap. V.

M<sup>gr</sup>. de Segur, "that has introduced amongst us this anti-Catholic fear which, under pretence of greater sanctity, exalts confession at the expense of Communion, wears us out with scruples, falsifies the conscience, and delights the devil infinitely by keeping us *respectfully* afar from the Adorable Eucharist, the living Furnace of holiness."<sup>1</sup>

I have denominated this prejudice baneful and fatal. I have said still more, namely, that it is inspired by Satan in order to render frequent and daily Communion morally impossible. And, indeed, O Christian soul, were weekly confession necessary for daily and worthy Communion, we should be constrained to exclaim with tears: "Adieu, frequent Communion! Adieu, daily Communion! at least, in places where there are no confessors!" And the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII. would have done a useless thing in his Encyclical on the Holy Eucharist, when he wrote to the Bishops and through them to the clergy: "Above all, is it proper to labour at restoring in the Catholic world the custom of frequent Communion after the example of the primitive Church,"<sup>2</sup> which daily nourished itself with the Divine Flesh of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Is it possible for all good Christians to confess every week? It would be folly to hope for such a thing. How could weekly confession be reconciled with the numerous affairs that absorb the days of the greater number? Think of the multitude of labourers who toil the whole week! of the legion of bread-winners who, from morning to night, bathe the ground with their sweat! of those devoted wives whose first cares must

<sup>1</sup> *La très sainte communion*, ch. V.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclical Letter already quoted.

be given to a husband and often even to a numerous family ! of those pious young girls still under the control of their parents !

Now, tell me, Christian soul, how could all these Christians confess every week above all, if the church was at a distance from their home ? It would be possible for them to do so only on Sunday. They would then be obliged to sacrifice their rest in order to rise early and go to church. *Could* all do that ? *Would* all do it after the fatigue of the preceding days ? But admit that they *could* and *would*, would it still be possible for them to make their confession ? What would they do if, when arrived at the church, they found no confessor ready to hear them ? or suppose the confessional already besieged ? Could they wait there a long time ? And if among the first comers, there should be some who, from not knowing how to make their confession or from necessity, remained half an hour, or even a whole hour, in the confessional ? And again, would there always be a sufficient number of confessors ? Could they devote long hours to the hearing of sacramental confessions without failing in the other duties of the sacerdotal ministry ?

I say frankly, if we, priests, wish that daily, or at least frequent Communion, or even Communion on feasts, should not be a dream, a chimera, we must endeavour to restore in the Catholic world the frequentation of the Eucharistic Table, while at the same time we aim at *decreasing* the confessions that are not *necessary*. Let us teach souls to communicate joyously and fearlessly every day that they can for weeks, for months even, if necessary, without confession when they are not *certain* of having sinned mortally since their last

confession. And let them not omit Communion from their inability to approach more frequently the tribunal of penance.

As to you, Christian soul, for whom I write, remember these words of Mgr. de Segur : "There is only one case," says the Council of Trent, "in which we are *obliged* to confess before communicating, and that is, when we are *conscious*, in other words, when we are *certain* of having committed a mortal sin." And these others of the enlightened Frassinetti : "There is no need to confess every week in order to communicate every day. The practice is very laudable, but not *necessary*."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Why would not daily confession be as useful as daily Communion ?*

You have, Christian soul, discarded the prejudice that weekly confession is *necessary* for communicating worthily every day. You understand that the confession preceding Communion is of *obligation* only for those that have the *certitude* of being in a state of mortal sin.

Now you ask : Why daily confession would not be as useful as daily Communion ?

I answer that there is no comparison between the two.

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Holy Communion, ch. V.—Dissert. upon Daily Communion*, n. 19. We know that the Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* was followed by a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics (Feb. 14th, 1906). According to this Decree the Faithful who, in a state of grace and with a right and pious intention, habitually communicate every day—though they should occasionally during the week omit a communion—may gain the Plenary Indulgences without being obliged to weekly confession, which otherwise would be *necessary* to gain these Indulgences.



Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist to be the nourishment of souls that live in His grace, the antidote of their daily miseries, that is, of their venial sins. Every one knows how useful it is daily to receive this Sacrament devoutly, "in order that daily it may profit us."<sup>1</sup> To approach the Holy Table *at least* once a year is not only *useful*, but still more *necessary* whether to obey the precept of the Church, or the command of Jesus Christ, who has said : "If you eat not My Flesh, you shall not have life in you,"<sup>2</sup> the life of grace and, consequently, that of glory.

The Sacrament of Penance, on the contrary, was instituted, not to nourish and preserve the life of grace in souls, but to heal them of grave wounds caused by mortal sin. "It is, then, not necessary for all souls, but only for those that have been wounded mortally by sin, just as corporeal medicine is necessary for a man attacked by a dangerous illness."<sup>3</sup> To others, the Sacrament is only *useful*, "because it is useful to accuse one's self of venial sins in confession."<sup>4</sup> But would it be useful always? Would it be useful every day? In itself, yes, for every sacramental absolution is like a new bath in the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. We know of some saint who confessed every day. And yet, in view of the circumstances that accompany this Sacrament, it follows that frequent confession, even weekly confession, is not always useful; and that the confession made more frequently than every eight days, and above all, daily confession, is in general almost

<sup>1</sup> S. August, *De verb*, Dom serm. XXVIII.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 54.

<sup>3</sup> S. Thom. III. a P., p. LXXXIV art. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Council of Trent, Sess. XIV. cap. V.



always hurtful. There are several reasons for this : “ first, because pious seculars have their family occupations, their professions, which might easily be neglected by their going to confession several times in the week ; secondly, because the confessor who devotes much of his time to a few pious persons, might fail to hear the confessions of sinners who have much more need of the Sacrament ; thirdly, because those persons, and they are always women, who want almost daily confession, are generally weak-minded, and they become so much the more so as they confess oftener. The confessor who always hears them and who is not annoyed by it, soon acquires the reputation of a frivolous man, and even worse still if his penitents are young and talkative. He who has the patience to listen for a long time to one of this class several times a week, must be resigned to see his reputation assailed.”<sup>1</sup>

I say to you, Christian soul, that even weekly confession is not always useful, because it may sometimes be an occasion of hurt to yourself and to others. This would be the case if, for example, you desired to confess every week to the detriment of the duties of your state ; or again, if there were only a few confessors and they were very much occupied in hearing persons who rarely approached the Sacraments and who might, perhaps, have great need of them, especially if they are men. “ In this case,” observes the judicious Frassinetti, “ it would be proper to exhort them to go to Communion, even daily, although confessing only every fifteen

<sup>1</sup> Frassinetti, *Abrégé de la theol. mor.* S. Alph. Vol. II., trat XVI. disc. xv., sec. 5. The entire paragraph will be very useful to confessors. (See French translation, pub. M. l'Abbé Fourez, Senior Dean of Chatelet, Belgium, Vol. II.)

days, or even at longer intervals," the weekly confession not being *necessary*, I repeat, for frequent or even daily Communion,

## 3. *How important it is that confessions should be brief.*

You are now, Christian soul, as I think, well convinced that weekly confession is not *necessary* for good daily Communion, and that, even in certain cases it is even better to omit it. I shall now say a few words to show you how important it is to be always short in your confessions, that is, not to prolong them by useless talk. Yes, brevity is important in confession, as well for yourself, as for those that are waiting their turn at the confessional, and even for the confessors.

First of all, for yourself, because in general short confessions render the soul sincere, detached, tranquil and joyous; while those that are dragged out to a great length often produce timidity, inquietude, melancholy, and perplexity.

In the second place, brevity in confession is important for the sake of those that are waiting their turn at the confessional; for it is no rare thing for those that are waiting for a penitent who remains half hours or even whole hours in the confessional, to be astonished, restless, annoyed, that they complain, especially if they are men,<sup>1</sup> and that it should end by their not going to confession and Communion at all, either through vexation, or because of the impossibility of their waiting longer.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, Christian soul, it is important for your con-

<sup>1</sup> As a general rule, men ought always to be heard before women.

<sup>2</sup> There is no question, understand, of the confessions of poor sinners, so ignorant in matters of religion, as we see often in

fessor that your confessions should be short, because, apart from other considerations, you should understand that, if time is precious for all, it is much more so for priests, who cannot waste the least portion of it without prejudice to the good of souls, to which their sacerdotal life is consecrated. Why do you wish your confessor to waste his time listening to your long discourses, when he might employ it, to the great consolation of the heart of Jesus, in doing good to many other souls, especially by hearing the confessions of poor sinners? I say *uselessly*, for in reality there is question of hearing only your sins. Since you confess frequently, you can accuse yourself in a few moments of your impatience, murmurs, disobedience, prevarications, and others of a like kind. Should he, then, for no possible advantage, lose his time listening to your excuses for your sins, to their vain and useless circumstances, sometimes to the manifestations of the faults of children, of parents, of the husband, of a mother-in-law, of a sister-in-law, etc., and that not with the view of receiving light and counsel? These you have often received from your confessor, but you repeat the long story only to get some consolation for your self-love. Is this not true, Christian soul? Do not answer me that it is not that which renders your confessions so lengthy. What is it, then? It is that you are constantly repeating your fears of having made past confessions badly; or that you accuse yourself of actions committed with a continual these days. In this case the confessor ought to take the time necessary to instruct and prepare them for the sacraments. I am referring to the confessions of *pious* persons who *rarely* have real need of remaining long in the confessional. (See Frass.) *Abrege de la Theol. mor. de St. Alph. diss. XV. sec. 5*, entitled; "Avis pour les confessions des personnes pieuses." (Translation Fourez, Vol. II., p. 207.)

doubt as to whether they are mortal sins or not ; or, in fine, that you desire to confess a multitude of evil thoughts to which you always fear having given consent.

I understand, and I pity you, Christian soul. You will find my reply in the following section.

## 4. Some Rules for Scrupulous Souls.

If you are constantly tormented by the fear of having made your past confessions badly, or of having sinned mortally in almost all your actions, or, in fine, of consenting, or of having consented, to bad thoughts, you give, O Christian soul, unequivocal signs of scruples, and you are truly a scrupulous soul if your confessor judges you such. In this case understand, clearly that your mind is sick and that, in order to cure it, it is necessary for you to struggle courageously against your scruples, and to observe, with the advice of your confessor, the six following rules taken from the teaching of theologians, and especially from that of St. Alphonsus de Liguori. This holy Doctor has very well treated this matter as well in his moral<sup>1</sup> as in his ascetic works.<sup>2</sup>

Rule I. As to the past and all past confessions, whatever be the doubts and fears that arise in your mind, you ought never to think of them, never return to them in your accusations, looking upon them as non-existent before your last confession.

Rule II. Once for all, when you do not see evident and certain sin, when you only fear and doubt, despise your anxiety and act against it in all freedom and liberty, as if you were, so to speak, impeccable.

<sup>1</sup> See : *Theol mor.* lib. I., n. 11, 12, 13, 14.—*Practica del confessore*, cap. vii., n. 83, 84, 85, 86.—*Confessore diretto*, cap. I., n. 4, 5, 6, 7.—*Istruzione e pratica dei confessori*, cap. I., n. 8, 9, 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> See especially *The True Spouse of Christ*, chap. XVIII. sec. 2.



Rule III. Hold for certain that you have **never** committed mortal sin whenever you acted with the fear of committing it.

Rule IV. As to the evil thoughts that afflict you, whether against faith or purity, or whether they be thoughts of blasphemy, etc., believe firmly that you have not consented, consequently, not sinned, if you cannot swear to it, your hand on the Crucifix.

Rule V. You should never make the examen of conscience. This exercise, so useful to other souls, would be poisonous for you, scrupulous soul.

Rule VI. If you have not in your mind a sin which you can swear to be mortal and to have committed with full deliberation, then, O scrupulous soul, accuse yourself in confession of nothing in particular, but be content with a general accusation in these terms: *Father, I accuse myself of all my present and past sins, especially of those committed* (here it is well to specify a particular virtue, against which you have sinned in the past *for example, against purity, or obedience, or patience, etc.*) ; and this in order to present, for greater security, a matter certain and sufficient for sacramental absolution.

If you blindly and constantly obey your confessor, O Christian soul, by faithfully observing these *six rules*, not only will your confessions become very short, but I promise you still more that, with the help of God, by degrees you will be cured of your infirmity, you will enjoy great peace and tranquillity of mind, and "divine consolation will fill you with joy in proportion to the spiritual sorrow that you have endured,"<sup>1</sup> so that in your daily Communions "you will taste and see how sweet is the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm XCIII. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm XXXIII. 8.



## Daily Venial Sins.

*1. I fear to communicate often and daily, because I daily commit venial sins.*

I reply to you, Christian soul, that it is above all desirable that, with the help of divine grace, you should shun committing the slightest fault with full deliberation.

Venial sin, it is true, does not, like mortal sin, “cause us to turn back on God in order to follow after the creature in a disorderly manner.”<sup>1</sup> It is, nevertheless, a deviation of the will, which, although habitually turned towards God, actually walks no more, and defers going to Him as He would wish.<sup>2</sup>

Venial sin is, then, always intrinsically bad. It renders you less dear and even, in some way, disagreeable to Our Lord, who loves you so much and ardently desires to give Himself to you daily in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

But suppose the case that you commit daily these light faults and as often repair them, say a hundred or a thousand times. If on this account you fear to do wrong by communicating every day, I call your apprehension a vain fear proceeding from a Jansenistic *prejudice*. The prejudice lies in the idea that daily Communion is only for souls that do not habitually commit daily venial sins ; but it is just the contrary. For it is an effect of Communion to remit daily venial sins, as

<sup>1</sup> S. Thom. Ia. IIaa. q. LXXXVII. art. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*—q. LXXXVIII. art 1. Contra. gent. lib. III. q. CXLIV.

all theologians with St. Thomas teach.<sup>1</sup> Still more, as the Church teaches expressly through the Council of Trent, that Jesus Christ “wishes this Sacrament to be received as an antidote by which we are delivered from our daily faults.”<sup>2</sup>

It is for this reason that the holy Fathers—surely excellent spiritual directors—far from teaching not to make daily Communion when sinning venially every day, exhort the Faithful, on the contrary, to communicate daily, precisely because they daily commit venial sins. “Because you sin daily,” says St. Augustine, “Communicate daily.”<sup>3</sup> And in another place: “Take innocence” (the *state of grace*) “to the altar. As to your sins, even daily, it suffices that they be not mortal.”<sup>4</sup>

In another place he calls the Eucharist “the daily remedy.”<sup>5</sup>

Before him St. Ambrose wrote: “This daily Bread is taken as a remedy for daily infirmity.”<sup>6</sup> What is “daily infirmity,” excepting daily venial sin? Again, he adds: “The wounded seek a remedy. We are wounded, because we are sinners. The remedy is the celestial and venerable Sacrament.”<sup>7</sup> And further on, the holy Doctor says of himself: “I who sin always, must always have a remedy.”<sup>8</sup>

St. Isidore teaches: “If the sins are not sufficiently

<sup>1</sup> IIIa. Part. q. LXXIX. art. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Sess. XIII. cap. II.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Rom. Cat., Pt. II. cap. IV., n. 63.

<sup>4</sup> Tract. XXVI. in Joan.

<sup>5</sup> Epist. LI.

<sup>6</sup> S. Amb. lib. V. *De Sacr.*, cap. IV.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* lib. *De Sacr.*, cap. VI.

grave for a man to be judged worthy of excommunication" (*that is, if they are not truly mortal*) "he ought not to be kept away from the *daily* remedy of the Body of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Here we have in plain words that he ought to communicate every day. St. Hillary expresses the same sentiment, and both bring forward the same reason: "We must fear that he who communicates rarely will be lost, that he will be damned, for Jesus Christ has said to us, 'If you eat not My Flesh, you shall not have life in you.'"<sup>2</sup>

After all this, see, Christian soul, whether that apprehension of doing wrong by communicating devoutly every day, because of the venial faults into which you daily fall, is not a *vain fear*. Should you not rather fear weakening yourself every day by your daily venial sins; should you not fear to see your continual weakness ceasing to be light and becoming serious, if you take not the daily remedy of the Body of the Lord? I wish to say that, neglecting to communicate frequently and daily, you risk falling from venial sin into mortal sin. For not only does the Divine Eucharist cure us of our light daily faults, but It has also the power to preserve us from the wound of mortal sin, as the Angelic Doctor demonstrates<sup>3</sup> and as the Council of Trent teaches.<sup>4</sup>

I beg you then, Christian soul, never to sin even venially, and not to cause with full deliberation the least pain to the loving Heart of our great Saviour. But since your misery is so great that, in spite of your good resolutions, "your daily commit some venial sins," I

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by St. Alphonsus in his magnificent *Risposta apologetica sulla materia della Com. frequente*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Alph., *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> IIIa. Part q. LXXIX., art. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Sess. XIII., cap. 11.

say to you, "Communicate daily."<sup>1</sup> I repeat it not only with the great Bishop of Hippo, but with all the other Fathers of the Church who have written upon Holy Communion. In effect the sentence: "*Because you have sinned daily, communicate daily,*" is not peculiar to St. Augustine. Considering it well, we easily discover that it expresses the unanimous sentiment of the Fathers on this question.<sup>2</sup> And it is with reason, for "sinning always, we always have need of the remedy."<sup>3</sup>

2. *Daily committing so many venial sins, shall I not give scandal by communicating daily?*

No, Christian soul. Rather you do so, though in general only slightly, by the venial sins that you are seen to commit, and this is one of the reasons for which I exhort you to avoid them as much as our weak nature permits. But you never give real scandal, when, having committed them, you go even daily to communicate devoutly. As there is no scandal for an invalid to receive the daily visit of a physician, and daily to take medicines, neither can you give it by going daily to the Holy Table to take Jesus, the Physician and the Remedy of our spiritual daily infirmity, that is, of our daily venial sins.

I must say that I cannot understand how so many spiritual directors are found—otherwise good men and worthy of esteem—who entertain this *prejudice*, or rather this *vain fear* of scandal, which I call imaginary.

They object: If imperfect souls, who daily commit

<sup>1</sup> S. Aug. *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Cct. Rom. *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> S. Ambr., *De Sacr.*, lib. IV., cap. VI.

venial sins, receive daily Communion, the neighbours will be scandalised. Many say, in effect : See that man, see that woman. They communicate so often ! and yet they do not know how to conquer their resentments, to refrain from censuring others. They are constantly yielding to impatience, showing ambition, etc. !

Listen, Christian soul, to what the pious and learned Frassinetti wisely replies to those directors in his popular little golden book entitled, *Enlightened Devotion* :<sup>1</sup> “Is it true,” he asks, “that souls still imperfect give scandal by their frequent Communions? It seems to me that the scandal comes rather from you when you teach that frequent and daily Communion exacts great sanctity. According to your doctrine, many think that they who communicate often, although evidently wanting in the perfection required by you, do very wrong and abuse the Blessed Sacrament. Put away this rigourism. Teach rather with the Holy Fathers, the Council of Trent (and the recent Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*), that Communion is prohibited to those only who are guilty of mortal sin, that Communion admits of venial sins, that It even effaces them wherever It finds them. In this way you will cause scandal to disappear. . . .

“And then, of what scandal are you speaking? I know of no real scandal but that which springs from some voluntary fault by which one gives occasion of sin to his neighbour. Can it be that the imperfect who communicate often are guilty of giving to those that see them communicating a true occasion of sin? If this were so, how much more would we, priests, give scandal, we, who certainly not being all perfect (and the

<sup>1</sup> Tip. Arc. 1877, Genova.



Faithful know it well) fail not to celebrate Holy Mass every day ! ”<sup>1</sup>

You have heard the answer, Christian soul, is it not persuasive? Do not, then, abandon daily Communion through the *vain fear* of scandalising them who know your imperfections and the venial sins you commit daily. Fear rather not giving good example if they do not see you, you whom they know to be miserable and infirm, recurring daily, as far as you can to Him who is the source of mercy ; if they do not see you receiving every day the antidote of your daily sins, namely, the Holy Eucharist. For “ this Divine Sacrament is the health of soul and body and the remedy of all spiritual evils. It is by It that your vices are cured, your passions repressed, your temptations vanquished or weakened. By It, again, graces are given you in greater abundance, virtue is increased, faith is strengthened, hope fortified, and charity inflamed and dilated.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Intrusione sulla S.S. Comunione.*

<sup>2</sup> *Imitation of Jesus Christ.* Bk. IV., ch. IV.

## The Affection to Venial Sin.

1. *Do I not commit a new venial sin of irreverence against the august Sacrament by making frequent and daily Communion when not only am I burdened with venial sins, but I still have an affection for some of these sins.*

If we rendered ourselves guilty of a new venial sin by receiving Holy Communion with the *affection to some venial sin* for example, to vanity, to anger, etc., under such conditions, Christian soul, not only should we not communicate every day, but we ought to do so neither once a week, nor once a month, nor even once a year, although the Church commands it at Easter, for it is never lawful to offend God even lightly !

But is it, indeed, a new venial sin to communicate with *affection to some small fault*? No (and it is St. Alphonsus who answers you) provided you have in communicating no intention slightly bad, for example, vain-glory, and provided also that you do not suffer yourself to be voluntarily distracted at the very moment of receiving the Sacred Host. Give to the following words all the attention they deserve. They are the words of a Doctor and a saint : “ If you commit in Communion,” he says, “ a venial fault referring directly to Communion, for example, if you communicate through vain-glory or with voluntary distraction, there is no doubt that you sin venially by communicating in this disposition, for

such a fault is a positive irreverence towards the Sacrament. Nevertheless, this sin, as St. Thomas<sup>1</sup> declares, although depriving you of spiritual refection (that is, of the spiritual sweetness this Sacrament brings with It when no fault is committed in Its inception),<sup>2</sup> places no obstacle to the increase of grace or charity."<sup>3</sup>

Now, pay strict attention to what follows: "But if there is question not of a venial sin directly touching communion, as, for instance, of communicating with affection to any *other* venial sin, there is *no sin*."

Then, according to St. Alphonsus, we do not sin if we communicate with a *right intention and if we shun voluntary distractions*, that is, if we communicate *devoutly*, although with an *affection* to some venial sin. Now, since we do not sin by communicating with such an affection, we lawfully accomplish, and thereby even holily, an action of its own nature very holy and very advantageous.<sup>4</sup>

This granted, would it be wise because you have an affection to some venial sin, to refrain from daily communion and deprive yourself of the great fruits It produces, provided it be well understood that you approach the Holy Table with a *right intention and without voluntary distraction*, that is, *devoutly*? Have you not so much more need of the Celestial Remedy as your infirmity is greater?

Far, then, from engaging you to abstain from daily Communion because you have an *affection to some venial sin*, I rather exhort you to communicate daily.

<sup>1</sup> III. P., q. LXXIX. art. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See above.

<sup>3</sup> *Homo Apostolicus*, tr. xv. pl., n. 7 (Ed. Marietti, t. IX. p. 329.

<sup>4</sup> Notice the approved teaching in the recent Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*.

And when you press your Jesus on your heart, supplicate Him humbly and confidently to help you to overcome this *affection*, this habit slightly bad. The Good Master, by means of the charity that is daily increased in you by daily Communion will by degrees weaken it, and will at last destroy it altogether, for "There is no habit, how sad or deeply rooted it may be, which is not weakened by frequent Communion, and does not, at last, entirely disappear."<sup>1</sup>

Happy, then will you be, Christian soul ! For united every day to the Divine Spouse, stripped of every bad habit, adorned with virtues, you will often hear sounding in your heart these words of the Canticles : "Thou art all fair, my beloved, thou art all fair !"<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Why was it that St. Francis de Sales did not wish one who had an affection to venial sin to communicate even every eight days ?

We have seen in the preceding paragraph that, according to St. Alphonsus, we communicate always lawfully, therefore *holily*, even with an *affection to some venial sin*, provided that we do so with a *right intention and without voluntary distractions*, which means provided we communicate *devoutly*. Consequently, there exists no reason not to exhort those that are found in this state to make daily Communion as a daily remedy for their infirmities. You ask me now, O Christian soul, why St. Francis de Sales does not permit souls having

<sup>1</sup> Cacciaguerra, quoted by St. Alphonsus in his *Risposta Apologetica sulla materia della Comunione frequente*, Cf. Decree of the S. Cong. of the Council, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Cant. I. 14.

an *affection to venial sin* to communicate even every eight days?<sup>1</sup>

To this difficulty St. Alphonsus answers for me in two excellent little works<sup>2</sup> in which he demonstrates even to evidence—contrary to the teaching of St. Francis de Sales—that we ought to exhort all souls that live in the grace of God to communicate every eight days,<sup>3</sup> although they may have *some affection to some light fault*. Still more, he tells us that the opinion of St. Francis de Sales was founded upon a text, erroneously attributed in his time to St. Augustine and, moreover, wrongly interpreted by the holy Bishop of Geneva, as St. Alphonsus himself solidly proves.<sup>4</sup> The passage in question, as is commonly admitted to-day, is from Gennadius, a writer who, in the opinion of many, is very erudite, but whose doctrine is not very trustworthy.<sup>5</sup>

“If St. Francis de Sales had known—he who was so ready to help souls by frequent Communion—that he was supporting himself not upon the authority of St. Augustine, but upon that of Gennadius, often opposed to the great Doctor, it is very likely that he never would have attached any value to this text.”<sup>6</sup>

That St. Francis de Sales was strongly inclined to aid souls by frequent Communion, is clearly seen from these words, which I offer to your pious consideration :

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to a Devout Life*, Pt. II. ch. XX.

<sup>2</sup> *Risposta apolog.*, above quoted, and *Breve aggiunta sulla materia della Comunione frequenti*. (Ed. Marietti, t. IX., p. 892.)

<sup>3</sup> As to the formula of St. Alphonsus, “every eight days, *non tutti*, not *every day*.” I shall speak of it in the following paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> The text is: “He who has an affection to sin, ought not to communicate every Sunday.” We must understand: *to mortal sin*, and St. Francis de Sales understood it: *to venial sin*. (St. Alphonsus, passage cited above.)

<sup>5</sup> See Wouters. *Abrégé d'Histoire eccles.*, Vol. IV. n. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Breve aggiunta*.



“If the worldly ask you why you communicate so often, tell them that it is to learn to love God, to purify yourself from your imperfections, to free yourself from your miseries, to console yourself in your afflictions, to support yourself in your weaknesses.

“Tell them that two kinds of people ought to communicate often: the perfect, because being well disposed, they would do very wrong not to approach the source and fountain of perfection; and the imperfect” (such as I who write, and you, Christian soul, who read), “precisely in order to reach perfection; the strong that they may not become weak, and the weak that they may become strong; the sick that they may be cured, the well that they may not become sick; and that, as for yourself, like the imperfect, the weak, and the sick, you have need of frequently receiving your Perfection, your Strength, your Physician. Tell them that they who have few worldly affairs ought to communicate often, because they have the leisure for it; and in like manner they who have many business affairs, because they have great need of it.”<sup>1</sup>

Are you convinced, Christian soul, that St. Francis de Sales was entirely disposed to help souls by frequent Communion? But remark what follows: “Communicate often, O Philothea, and as often as you can” (then, even every day) “with the advice of your spiritual Father.” (Yes, because to communicate with the advice of the confessor is much better and more meritorious);<sup>2</sup> “and believe me, by continually eating,

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to a Devout Life*, Pt. II. ch. XXI.

<sup>2</sup> The advice of the confessor is demanded, also, by the Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*, which immediately adds: “But let confessors beware of deterring from frequent, or even daily Communion, any soul in a state of grace that wishes to communicate with a right intention.”

relishing, adoring Beauty, Goodness, Purity, itself in this Divine Sacrament you will become all beautiful, all good, all pure. . . . !"<sup>1</sup>

3. *Why does St. Alphonsus, who so earnestly exhorts to weekly Communion even those that have an affection to venial sin, not permit them to communicate oftener, much less daily?*

In the two preceding paragraphs you have seen, Christian soul, that the Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus, teaches you : first, that it is lawful to communicate with *affection to venial sin* and that, consequently, in communicating even with this *affection*, you perform a *holy* action ; secondly, that we ought, in consequence, exhort souls in the grace of God to approach the Holy Table devoutly every eight days, although they have this *affection*. But you cannot understand why he does not permit them in this case to communicate *more frequently*, still less *every day*.

Is not that an inconsistency? you ask me : What ! the holy Doctor exhorts me to communicate *devoutly* once a week, although I have an *affection to venial sin*, because I communicate lawfully, also *holily*. With the same *affection to venial sin*, would I not communicate lawfully, consequently *holily*, if I did so two or three times a week ? And if I communicate lawfully, consequently *holily*, two or three times in the week, why not four, five, six times ?

. . . Why not every day? . . . And if, com-

<sup>1</sup> Pt. II. ch. XXI.

municating daily—with an *affection to venial sin*, I perform an action lawful and *holy*, why exhort me on account of the affection to venial sin to approach the Holy Table only once a week, and forbid my doing so oftener? . . . I repeat, is not the holy Doctor here in contradiction with himself?

I say to you, Christian soul, that here St. Alphonsus shows himself *very prudent*. He was a saint, and the saints always aim at acting *prudently*. Consider the time in which he lived, the excessive rigour which regulated the disposition for frequent and daily Communion, and see what *prudence* exacted of him. It seems to me that it exacted of him to write in such a way, that, wishing more, he might not lose the less. For having taught (yet with great moderation), contrary to St. Francis de Sales, that one who preserves an *affection to venial sin* may be permitted to communicate once a week,<sup>1</sup> he saw himself the object of violent attacks. His doctrine was treated as scandalous,<sup>2</sup> and he had to defend himself on two occasions by clear replies.<sup>3</sup> Reflect a little, Christian soul, on what would have been said and written against him, to the great detriment of souls, had he taught that they who have an *affection to venial sin* might communicate not only once a week, but *oftener*, even *every day*?

It was, then, very necessary that St. Alphonsus in his words and writings should proceed with very great *prudence*. It was prudence that suggested to him not only to permit souls having an *affection to venial sin* to communicate more than once a week, but still more to

<sup>1</sup> *Praxis Confes.*, cap. IX. sec. 4, n. 149.

<sup>2</sup> *Risp. apolog.*

<sup>3</sup> *Risp. apolog. et Breve aggiunta.*

indicate, as required by daily Communion, the same dispositions that St. Francis de Sales prudently demanded, having regard to the exigencies of his time: that is, besides *detachment from venial sin, a great desire to communicate, the having surmounted the greater part of one's evil inclinations, and obedience to the advice of one's confessor.*<sup>1</sup>

I say *having had regard to the exigencies of his time*, for St. Francis de Sales could not have been ignorant of what St. Alphonsus wrote later: "Down to the pontificate of Nicholas I., at least, that is, in the ninth century, to communicate every day, it sufficed to have no grave faults upon one's conscience and to be without affection for any of these faults, or to have confessed them rightly."<sup>2</sup> Here we see no question of a *great desire to communicate* (which the holy Fathers knew well how to excite both by word and writing where it did not before exist), nor of *having surmounted the greater part of one's bad inclinations*, nor, in fine, of *the advice of the spiritual Father.*<sup>3</sup> And what sufficed then

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life*, Pt. II., ch. XX.—St. Alphonsus, *Praxis Confess.*, Ch. IX., sec. 4, n. 150.—As to the counsel of the confessor for frequent and daily Communion, although it may not be *necessary* in order to approach the Holy Table lawfully, being *imposed* by no precept, nevertheless, it is demanded in order to give *greater merit* to Communion. (See Card. Gennari, *Consult. sulla Comunione frequente e sul Decreto Quemadmodum*, cap. I., sec. 7, regola 6.)

<sup>2</sup> *Risp. apolog.*

<sup>3</sup> The counsel of the confessor, not only was not then required, but it could not be, because prior to the eighth century Christians had the custom of confessing only when they had fallen into mortal sin. (St. Alphonsus *Confess. diret.*, cap. XXI. p. 2 n. 32.) It is for this reason that St. Thomas, who summarised the doctrine of the Fathers, when treating of the dispositions for daily Communion, makes no mention of the *counsel of the confessor*, neither in the "*Summa Theologica*" (III. P., q. LXXX., art. 10), nor in the Commentary on the "Four Books of the Sentences,"



as an habitual disposition ought certainly to suffice in the time of St. Francis de Sales, as it suffices to-day ; for since the ninth century the Church has promulgated no precept imposing for daily communion anything more than the state of grace.

But woe to St. Francis de Sales if, in his time, he had taught that the state of grace *alone* sufficed for communicating worthily every day ! Woe to him, again, if, besides the state of grace, he had been satisfied with exacting *only detachment from venial sin*,<sup>1</sup> without any other disposition for daily Communion !<sup>2</sup>

It was for this reason that St. Alphonsus, as well as St. Francis de Sales, took into consideration the state of mind of his contemporaries, and demanded for daily Communion, besides the state of grace, *detachment from venial sin*, as also the other dispositions mentioned above. He wished to show himself *prudently* rigid, in order that the rigourists of the day, who were already raising up so many difficulties, would leave him in peace, while in his sermons, confessions, writings, he so zealously and fervently exhorted all souls in the state

in which it is said, on the contrary, that "to make or not to make daily Communion, is left to every one's own judgment." (Dist. XII., q. III., art. I., quest. 2.) Now, for greater prudence and merit, the Decree imposes the obligation of asking counsel of the confessor.

<sup>1</sup> See the preceding paragraph.

<sup>2</sup> It is to be noted that, in the time of St. Francis de Sales, the Church had not yet condemned the rigid doctrine taught and sustained by the numerous disciples of Baius, who, drawing consequences from the errors of their master, pretended that "they ought to be obliged to abstain from Holy Communion who had not yet the pure love of God without mixture of any defect, that is, those that were not pure as the angels of Paradise !" This proposition was condemned by Alexander VIII., in the Decree *Sanctissimus Dominus noster*, December 7, 1690, at which time St. Francis de Sales had already gone to a happy eternity sixty-eight years before !



of grace to communicate every week, whether they had or had not an *affection to venial sin*.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, God alone knows how much these holy Doctors, so inflamed with love for the Blessed Sacrament, so passionately eager for daily Communion, prayed in the secret of their heart to hasten the moment in which they would be permitted to teach freely and openly what the austere rigourism of their time forced them to keep silent through *prudence*!

But the time came when the illustrious Mgr. de Sègur could write : “ One only disposition is of *precept* for communicating worthily and usefully, and that is, the state of grace, accompanied by the firm purpose of shunning at least mortal sin and the occasions of mortal sin. Behold the law which rules all Communion, frequent or non-frequent, the daily Communion of the priest, as well as the Paschal Communion of the ordinary Christian.<sup>2</sup> The time has come when the pious, learned and experienced Frassinetti is able to teach openly : “ The Christian who communicates every day, although with imperfections and venial sins, receives daily an increase of sanctifying grace. Behold the good that I see, and which appears to me truly great. This great

<sup>1</sup> Whence we may infer the value of those rules laid down as *necessary* for frequent and daily Communion by all the moralists and ascetic writers who have blindly followed the two holy Doctors, without taking account of the time in which they wrote. St. Alphonsus himself gives these rules in his spiritual works, especially in the *Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ* and in *The True Spouse of Christ*. It is proper to warn souls on this point when we advise them, and with good reason, to read and meditate the excellent works of the holy Doctor. So warned, they will not draw, to their great detriment, from a reading otherwise most useful, those *prejudices* and *vain fears* in relation to frequent and daily Communion. Since the publication of the Decree, the duty becomes still more pressing.

<sup>2</sup> *The Most Holy Communion*, ch. I.

good—it is to be noted—is gained even by him who communicates with an *affection to venial sin.*”<sup>1</sup>

The time has come in which a review which carries with it authority—*La Civiltà Cattolica*—could wisely observe: “If the conditions well known—but UNKNOWN TO ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. THOMAS<sup>2</sup>—of detachment from venial sin, of the usage of meditation,<sup>3</sup> were absolutely required by the holiness of the Sacrament for the daily Communion of laics, we do not see why the confessor should not exact them equally, even with greater reason, of priests, in order to allow them the daily Celebration which is terminated by Communion. This is certainly not the common practice, and it has never been inculcated, as we know.

“They will say—this objection has been presented—that the priest celebrates the Divine Sacrifice in the name of the Church. We confess that we do not seize the force of this reply. The sacerdotal dignity does not necessarily imply daily celebration for every priest, still less does it exact it or authorise it in him who brings not thereto the dispositions of purity and holiness which ought certainly to be found in a more eminent degree in

<sup>1</sup> *Diss. sur la Com. quot.*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> See the learned labour, blessed by our Holy Father Pope Pius X., of Don Vittorio Mariani, Cappellano al Piaggione di Lucca, entitled: *Per risolvere una questione*, part 2, sec. 2, 3, 4. (Sold by the author. Price, 1 fr.)

<sup>3</sup> St. Alphonsus does not exact for daily Communion the custom of meditation (*Praxis Conf.*, cap. IX., sec. 4, n. 150): but he insinuates that the director would sin, with some exceptions, by refusing daily Communion by souls who, besides the other dispositions demanded by him, would have in addition, the custom of meditation. (*Ibid.*, n. 162.) After the decree of Pius X., the confessor who keeps from the Holy Table a penitent in the state of grace and desirous of approaching with a right and pious intention, certainly sins.

the priest for the celebration of the sublime Sacrifice than among the simple Faithful for the reception of the Eucharist."<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, appears the Decree of Pius X.

Might we not say that St. Alphonsus himself foresaw these times when regretting, so to speak, the too perfect dispositions demanded by him for daily Communion, he wrote: "The more infirm you see yourself" (*is not affection to venial sin a great infirmity?*), "the more ought you to seek the remedy that Holy Communion offers you, according to the word of St. Ambrose: 'I who sin constantly, constantly ought to have a remedy.'"<sup>2</sup> To walls that incline, we place props, not to straighten them, but to prevent them from falling.—You see no progress, you say. And if you did not communicate, would you be better?—No, you would be worse!

<sup>1</sup> Livraison du 7 Octobre, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. IV., *De Sacr.*, cap. VI.

<sup>3</sup> *The True Spouse of Christ*, chap. XVIII., sec. 3, n. 13.

## Abstention through Respect.

### 1. *Is it not better to abstain sometimes from Holy Communion through respect?*

I answer you plainly, no, Christian soul. This is the common opinion of the Doctors, and especially of the prince of theologians, St. Thomas,<sup>1</sup> and of the most distinguished of the moralists, St. Alphonsus.<sup>2</sup> They say that it is much better to communicate daily through *love*, than to abstain sometimes through *respect*, and this for the following reasons :

First, by communicating daily through *love*, we procure more glory to God than by abstaining sometimes through *respect*. For these are the words of St. Thomas: "The glory and goodness of God consist, above all, in giving Himself entirely to His creatures, according to their capacity ; whence it is manifest that we render

<sup>1</sup> IV. *Sent.*, Dist. 12, quest. II., art. 2, solut. 3. *Idem.*, III. a. P. 2, LXXX., art. 10 ad. tertium.—We may observe, however, that St. Thomas also says that it is *better* to abstain from Communion than it *would* even be to make it, when we perceive or foresee a lessening of *respect* toward the Sacrament. (IV. *Sent.*, Dist. 12, quest. III., art. I., solut. 2. et art. 2, solut. 3.) If we understand by these words that reverence or respect may be wanting in him who communicates *devoutly*, that is, without *voluntary* distraction, it is a contrary meaning which St. Thomas himself altogether excludes in his *Summa Theologica* (III. P. LXXX., art. 10 ad tertium), written by him long after, when still another erroneous opinion concerning the effects of the Eucharist was circulating. (Compare IV. *Sent.*, Dist. 12, quest. II., art. I., solut. 3; art. 2, solut. 3—and *Sum. Theol.*, III. P., art. 5 and 8.)

<sup>2</sup> *Praxis. Conf.*, cap. IX., sec. 4, n. 151.

Him greater glory by receiving Him than by *abstaining*." <sup>1</sup>

Secondly, because daily Communion is most ardently desired by the most loving Heart of Jesus,<sup>2</sup> and that it is always preferable to realise the Divine desires than not to respond to them. And do not say, Christian soul, that Jesus Christ does not desire daily Communion from all souls living in His grace, but only from those that, detached from affection to venial sin, always walk in the way of perfection. No, for, as we have already seen, the Church, the infallible interpreter of what her Spouse desires, by the organ of the Council of Trent, expresses to us the desire that all the Faithful should daily communicate.<sup>3</sup> Speaking afterward of the dispositions *necessary* for communicating worthily, making no distinction between Communion rare, frequent, or daily, she exacts nothing more than the state of grace or, better, nothing more than not to be CERTAIN of having committed mortal sin, without having previously confessed it.

Thirdly, because you suppose, Christian soul, that sometimes omitting Holy Communion through *respect*, you receive It afterward with more fervour and devotion. But this appears to me inadmissible. What, in effect, do you understand by more *fervour* and *devotion*? Is it, perhaps, *greater charity*? But by communicating daily through *love*, you will certainly have *greater charity* than he who abstains sometimes through *respect*, for this Divine Sacrament is precisely instituted "not only to increase habitual charity, but still more to excite actual

<sup>1</sup> IV. *Sent.*, Dis. 12, quaest. III., art. 2, solut. 3 ad secundum.

<sup>2</sup> See at the beginning of treatise, "To the Christian Soul."

<sup>3</sup> Sess. XXII., cap. VI.—Sess. XIII., cap. VIII., can. II.



charity.”<sup>1</sup> By greater fervour and devotion, do you understand the *sentiment* of charity itself? In that case, I reply that I would prefer to have one degree more of charity without the sentiment, than to experience the sweet sentiment with one degree less of charity.

Fourthly, because communicating *devoutly* every day, every day also is increased in you *habitual* and *actual* charity. Then it is impossible not to increase in the same way this *habitual* and *actual* respect, for which you wish to deprive yourself sometimes of Holy Communion. For not only is “charity the mother of all the virtues which it produces”<sup>2</sup> and “the form”<sup>3</sup> which animates them; it is still more, it is “their foundation and the root that supports and nourishes them”;<sup>4</sup> consequently, it is impossible for this divine virtue to increase in us without producing simultaneously an increase of all the virtues, among which is certainly found respect for the august Eucharist. It follows from this, then, that a soul who daily receives Jesus *devoutly* in Communion, will have for Him more *habitual* and *actual respect* than he who remains afar through *respect*. Such were certainly St. Gertrude, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Jane de Chantal, and other holy souls who never deprived themselves of daily Communion.<sup>5</sup>

And, if it is objected that in our days there are no St. Teresas, we reply very justly with Père Barisone: “It is rashness to suppose that the arm of the Lord is shortened in our days.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Thom., III.a P., q. LXXIX., art. 4.

<sup>2</sup> S. Thom., II.a II.aa, q. XXIII., art. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> S. Alph., *Praxis Conf.*, cap. IX., sec. 4, n. 151.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Fifthly, because every time that you communicate, you surely make a little preparation before receiving the august Sacrament, and that, communicating every day through *love*, every day “you gain the merit of that preparation, *very short though it may be*”—that is the word of St. Thomas<sup>1</sup> *quantulacumque*—merit that you lose when, *through respect*, you omit Communion.

Sixthly, because on the days that you communicate through *love* you make an act of *charity*,<sup>2</sup> and the days on which you abstain you make an act of *humility*. Now, do you not know, Christian soul, that an act of *charity*, “which *unites* you directly to God,”<sup>3</sup> is much more meritorious and therefore much better than an act of *humility*, “which *prepares* you only<sup>4</sup> for this divine union?” Is not charity “the most excellent of all virtues,”<sup>5</sup> that “which comprises the root of all our merits.”<sup>6</sup>

Seventhly, because, “if the desire to communicate every day is born of *love*, the *respect* which restrains us sometimes proceeds from *fear*.”<sup>7</sup> Now do you not know, Christian soul, that “the love and confidence to which the Holy Scripture always invites us are much more excellent than fear?”<sup>8</sup>

Eightly, it is much better for you to communicate every day through *love* than to abstain sometimes through *respect*, because every Communion that you

<sup>1</sup> S. Thom. IV. *Sent.* Dist. 12, quæst. III., art. 2, solut. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* II.a-II.aa, q. XXII., art. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* IV. *Sent.*

<sup>7</sup> S. Thom., III.a P., LXXX., art. 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

omit is a truly great loss, since you are then deprived of the divine and marvellous effects that the Holy Eucharist produces by Itself. These effects are: firstly, the real and intimate union of our soul with Our Lord Jesus Christ; secondly, the increase of grace and charity; thirdly, the remission of all venial sins to which we have not an actual affection; fourthly, even the remission of mortal sins that we are not certain of having committed and to which, besides, we have no attachment;<sup>1</sup> fifthly, the full or partial remission of the punishment of past sins, according to the greater or less fervour with which you approach the Sacrament; sixthly, the preservation from the curse of mortal sin.<sup>2</sup>

After all these reasons, and there are others which, for brevity's sake, I do not bring forward. I conclude by addressing you in the words of the learned and zealous Frassinetti: "Never will I council my penitents to deprive themselves sometimes of Communion; rather will I beg other confessors not to subject theirs to such a privation. . . . I see that St. Francis de Sales approved of such a privation, for the reason that, after some days of abstinence, the soul relishes more the Divine Manna. He will pardon me for saying that such an argument fails to convince me. To the taste of the Sacrament, I think it much better to prefer its fruit, that is, the increase of sanctifying grace.—He who rarely eats, says St. Alphonsus, does so, it is true, with more appetite, but with less benefit. In the same way, by communicating rarely, one may experience a little more sensible devotion, but the spiritual profit is less,

<sup>1</sup> S. Thom., III.a P., q. LXXIX., art. 3.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Summa Theol.* S. Thomas speaks divinely of the effects of the Most Holy Communion in P. III., q. LXXIX.

for he deprives himself of the food that gives the strength to shun failures.<sup>1</sup> In truth, I prefer the strength which I receive every day from a suitable portion of bread to the special pleasure that the same would afford me did I eat less often. I can compare this abstinence from Holy Communion only to that which Adam would have observed in the terrestrial Paradise by depriving himself of the fruit of the tree of life, the most expressive figure of the Divine Eucharist."<sup>2</sup> You conclude, Christian soul, by saying to me: "Then, when I have no certainty of being in a state of mortal sin, and that I am not prevented by some duty, I ought never to omit Holy Communion?" —With Frassinetti, I answer: "Do you know when you ought to omit Communion?—On Good Friday!"<sup>3</sup>

2. *If it is better to communicate daily through love than to abstain sometimes through respect, why do not religious in general make daily Communion?*

Who has told you, Christian soul, that religious in general do not communicate every day? That is false. For *fervent* religious women and, consequently, they who are most desirous of their *spiritual profit*, not only aim at communicating every day appointed by their Rule, according to the admonition of the Holy See,<sup>4</sup> but they know well that "among all devotions, there is

<sup>1</sup> *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, chap. XVIII., sec. 3, No. 14,

<sup>2</sup> *Diss sopra la Com. Cotid.*, No. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Enlightened Devotion*: Instruction on Communion.

<sup>4</sup> Decree *Quemadmodum* of the S. C. of Bishops and Regulars, Dec. 17th, 1890.



none more dear to Jesus Christ than to receive Him in Holy Communion; they know well that all the perfection of a soul consists in her intimate union with God and . . . that it is Communion which unites us with God in the most perfect manner.”<sup>1</sup> With the advice of their confessor, they are careful not to let a single morning pass without receiving the kiss of their Divine Spouse—their Chosen among thousands<sup>2</sup>—lovingly given to them every day by the reception of His Body and His Precious Blood.

Just here I think of saying to you, Christian soul, that in all the religious communities which I have successively directed for twenty years, as well as I remember, I have never, or almost never, met a religious who, unless legitimately hindered, did not communicate every day. “By the fruits of these frequent Communion and by the progress in piety,”<sup>3</sup> I have been able

<sup>1</sup> S. Alph., *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, chap. XVIII., sec. 3, No. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Cant. V., 10.

<sup>3</sup> Innocent XI., Decree *Cum ad aures*.—According to St. Thomas, he who has a pure conscience, that is, pure from mortal sin (because venial sins neither destroying nor diminishing the habit of charity and the other virtues, do not, properly speaking, stain the soul) (Ia-II.aa, q. LXXXIX., art. 1) always communicates *devoutly*, that is if in the very act of Communion, he commits no light fault of voluntary distraction (III.a P., q. LXXVII., art. 8). Such a one can never be deprived of the fruits of frequent Communion nor of progress in piety, because, even after the commission of many venial sins, he receives fully the effect of this Sacrament (III.a P., q. LXXIX., art. 8) Now, to receive in full the effects of this Sacrament each time that we communicate, is not that *the fruit of frequent communion*, is not that *progress in piety*? This is said for the rigourists who attach too strict a sense to the Decree when it demands that confessors should be guided in granting frequent and daily Communion, by “the *purity* of conscience, the *fruit* of frequent Communion, and the *progress* in piety.” The soul is always habitually pure when she is not sullied by mortal sin; she always fully receives the fruit of Holy Communion, and she



to touch with the finger, as it were, the truth that the greatest means of perfection is daily Communion made devoutly. You will say to me: "Religious have their Communions of Rule, and they certainly are not daily." That is true, Christian soul; nevertheless, we must know that the Church, who so loves daily Communion, in approving those Rules, has never wished to prohibit more Communions than those thus indicated. She intends that the religious should make at *least* those prescribed by the Rule. This is so true that the Holy See regards as abrogated the articles of all *constitutions*, whether of men or of women, in which it is expressly prohibited to make more Communions than those fixed in these passages of the Rules.<sup>1</sup> It was for this reason that Cardinal Gennari says so well: "The Communions of the Rule are the *minimum* required of religious persons."<sup>2</sup>

If in some communities they make use of a calendar, approved by the Holy See, on which are marked the days of general Communion, the Holy See has itself declared that such a calendar cannot be considered *prohibitive*, that is, forbidding a greater number of Communions, but only *directive*. It thus admonishes religious that they ought to aim at living in such a manner as to be able to approach the Holy Table at least on the days designated, if there is no lawful hindrance. Of the Communions of the calendar must be said what has already been said of Communions of

progresses in piety, if she always communicates *devoutly*. On this point, also, the Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* has given the true sense of the Decree *Cum ad aures*.

<sup>1</sup> S. C. of Bishops and Regulars, Aug. 17th, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> Consult, already quoted, chap. II., sec. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

the Rule—they should be regarded as the *minimum* of the Communions that religious souls are called upon to make.<sup>1</sup> But if, among the people of the world, we cannot praise those who, free to communicate often, even every day, satisfy themselves with the Paschal Communion, because they do not respond to the manifest desire of Jesus Christ “to be our daily bread”<sup>2</sup> so, with still greater reason, we cannot praise the religious who is satisfied with making only the Communion of the Rule. I say, *with greater reason*, because being by the religious profession the spouse of Jesus Christ, she is so much the more obliged to accomplish not only His will, but still more His every wish. Is it not proper that the Heart of the Spouse and His spouse should make but one same heart?

If the Church ardently desires that all her children should communicate every day, how much more does she desire it for religious souls, her children of predilection! She desires it to such a degree that, in order to obviate the case in which superiors would wish to interfere and prevent Communions more frequent than those allowed by the Rule or the calendar, she has gone so far as to decree that “they have no authority whatever to meddle with the permissions or prohibitions concerning Holy Communion” (they cannot, then, forbid it) “except when some one has given scandal to the community since his last confession, or if, having committed some grave exterior fault, he has not yet confessed.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Card. Gennari, already cited ;—and S. C. of Bishops and Reg., Aug., 1888.

<sup>2</sup> Luke XI., 3.

<sup>3</sup> Decree *Quemadmodum*. If the Holy Church so ardently desires daily Communion in religious communities, how much

This decree is very just. For, "of whatever rank or pre-eminence the lay superiors or the superiors of religious communities may be, since it is strictly prohibited them to induce their subjects to manifest to them their conscience affairs" (since not being confessors, they ought not to penetrate into the secret of souls), "neither directly nor indirectly, neither by command, counsel, fear, threats, nor blandishments,"<sup>1</sup> it follows that they do not know their interior and, consequently, cannot properly judge of their dispositions for Holy Communion. The *only* duty, consequently, incumbent on religious toward their Superiors is to inform them—once suffices<sup>1</sup>—that they have the permission of the confessor to communicate more frequently than the days assigned by the Rule and even to make daily Communion.<sup>2</sup>

Now that you have read this paragraph, will you again tell me, Christian soul, that not even religious in general communicate every day.

### 3. *Do I do wrong in abstaining sometimes through respect from Holy Communion?*

It is better for you, Christian soul, to communicate daily through *love*, than to abstain sometimes through

more lively still is that desire for Seminaries! "Because," writes Mgr. de Segur, "if there is a place in the world in which they ought to communicate very often it is, without doubt, in the Seminaries great and small, in which are sheltered under the shadow of the altar the young elect whom, in His Infinite love, in His goodness and tenderness, the Saviour predestines to a participation in His divine priesthood." (*The Most Holy Communion. The Frequent Communion in Seminaries*)—The Decree of Pius X. also insists on this point. This is a great consolation for me, who have had the sorrow to learn that in a great Seminary of an archdiocese, in which daily Communion was not countenanced, my little work has not been able to penetrate!

<sup>1</sup> Decree already cited.

<sup>2</sup> S. Off., July 2nd, 1890.

*respect* (and for this reason, if I were your confessor, I would never dare, without a special inspiration, to counsel you this abstention). Nevertheless, do not think that you do wrong in abstaining when it is simply *respect* that keeps you away, and not disinclination or some *vain fear*, which your confessor commands you to despise. No, because, although Jesus Christ ardently desires that, living in His Grace, you should nourish yourself daily on Him in His Sacrament, yet neither He nor His Church has made it a precept, and there can be no sin where there is no law. On the other hand, *humility* which sometimes keep you *respectfully* away from the Divine Eucharist, is a great virtue. Thus we read in the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*: "If sometimes a person abstaineth out of *humility*, . . . he is to be commended for reverence."<sup>1</sup>

I do not conceal from you, Christian soul, that such abstentions through respect, although rare, seem to me *dangerous*; not certainly on account of any sin, for there is none, but because they may render you less dear to God, less pleasing to His Heart. Pius X., in his recent decree, mentioned above, advises no such abstention.

And indeed, since on the one hand you know how much Jesus Christ desires that all souls living in His grace should daily nourish themselves with Him, "the living Bread come down from Heaven,"<sup>2</sup> when duty does not prevent, how can you, on the other hand, be sure that He desires to see you sometimes absent yourself through respect from His Divine Sacrament? Is it by a special inspiration? But in this case, are you always certain that such an inspiration always comes

<sup>1</sup> Bk. IV. ch. X.

<sup>2</sup> John VI. 51.

from your sweet Saviour? . . . May it not emanate from Satan, the eternal enemy of Communion, above all of frequent and daily Communion? . . . Is it that "transfigured as an angel of light,"<sup>1</sup> he is seeking to deceive you under the appearance of good, under the pretext of respect and reverence toward the adorable Eucharist, as already under this fallacious appearance he seduced and led astray the disciples of the Jansenists, those false apostles whom we can never sufficiently detest?<sup>2</sup>

If, then, Christian soul, this inspiration should ever come to you—(and, thanks be to God, it has not yet come!)—of sometimes abstaining from Holy Communion through respect, manifest it to your confessor, abandoning yourself blindly to his decision, for "he who obeys his spiritual Father cannot go astray."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> II. Cor., XI., 14.

<sup>2</sup> Pius X. calls attention to the Jansenistic venom, "which, under the pretext of the honour and respect due the Eucharist, insinuated itself even into pious souls," and which has not yet entirely disappeared. To enter into the thought of the Holy Father let us scatter widely the present little work, whose reading will go far to dissipate vain fears and prejudices. (*Translator's Note.*)

<sup>3</sup> S. Alph., *The True Spouse of Christ*, chap. XVIII., sec. 2, n. 5.



## Preparation and Thanksgiving.

1. *I do not communicate daily nor often, because, not having time to prepare to receive so august a Sacrament, I fear doing so unworthily.*

What do you understand, Christian soul, by that word *unworthily*? Do you mean the committing a grave sacrilege? I reply that it is a *vain fear*; for as I have proved to you,<sup>1</sup> a Communion is really unworthy and sacrilegious *only* in the case of *certitude* with regard to being in the state of mortal sin.

Perhaps you wish to say that, not having the time to prepare, you fear not having all the devotion required. This time your fear is justified. The preparation is, in effect, of high importance, not only to draw more fruit from Communion, but still more because, if you neglect it, you would run the risk of *voluntary* distraction in the very act of Holy Communion. I repeat it, you would then commit a venial sin that would hinder you from tasting the spiritual sweetness of the Divine Eucharist,<sup>2</sup> that heavenly sweetness which helps you so much to walk more fervently in the way of infinite love.

But is there need of special time for this preparation? Yes, if you have it; no, if you have no leisure to take for it. Every moment, you say, is taken up by the

<sup>1</sup> First Difficulty, sec. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, sec. 2. See also sec. 4 of the Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*.

duties of your state. In that case, offer them to God as a continued preparation for Communion, and perform them without allowing yourself to be distracted by business and useless talk. If, for example, you cultivate the ground, offer to your Jesus the sweat that trickles constantly from your forehead and the rude labours of the fields. Would not that be a good preparation for the reception of the Divine Eucharist? Still better would it be if, to those labours, you join from time to time some ejaculatory prayers, as : "O my Jesus in the Sacrament, all my fatigue, all my sweat are for Thee, for love of Thee !" And if, in the course of your labour, you sometimes make spiritual Communion, some act of desire to receive your Saviour, O what an excellent preparation for you who can have no other !

Here is what St. Alphonsus says : " If you have not the leisure desirable to prepare for Communion, on account of your occupations or the demands of obedience"—(due for instance to parents, to a husband, to superiors)—" know that if you discharge these different cares with the intention of pleasing God, all will serve you for preparation."<sup>1</sup> And he relates the example of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, hearing one day the signal for Communion (customary in religious communities) while she was kneading the bread : " The saint immediately fell into ecstasy and thus, all out of herself, her hands full of dough, she went to communicate." St. Alphonsus adds afterward that the same Saint said to her Sisters : " *Offer to God all your actions as preparation. Act with the intention to please God, and communicate.*"

I conclude, Christian soul, with the words of the holy Doctor : " You must never omit Communion through

<sup>1</sup> *The True Spouse of Christ*, ch. XVIII., sec. 3, n. 6.

want of time to prepare for It, when you have been employing it in serving the family, in caring for some sick person, or in any other act of charity which could not be postponed,"<sup>1</sup> that is, which could not be conveniently deferred.

2. *I do not communicate every day, nor even often, because I cannot remain in church to make my thanksgiving.*

The thanksgiving after Communion, Christian soul, is not *necessary* in order to receive fully the effect of this Sacrament. It suffices, again I repeat to you, to be conscious of no mortal sin and to approach the Holy Table *devoutly*. To omit it, then, through *necessity*, does not diminish the Eucharistic glory of your sweet Jesus, the Divine Eucharist being in Itself both the gift and the thanksgiving. The thanksgiving, therefore, consists, above all, in receiving It with reverence and devotion.

Thanksgiving after Communion is, however, highly beneficial and proper, and I recommend it to you most earnestly. It is *highly beneficial* for the gathering of the most abundant fruits from the Sacrament. Many grave authors, among them Cajetan, Suarez, Gonet, Valencia, de Lugo, are of opinion that as long as the sacramental Species remain in the communicant, the more closely he keeps himself united to Jesus Christ and multiplies acts of virtue, the more he increases in himself the fruit of the Sacrament and divine love ; for this celestial Bread operates by Itself in the soul the same effects that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> By "thanksgiving" after Communion, we do not understand merely the single act of thanksgiving, but all the prayers and acts of devotion made at that moment.

material nourishment does in the body, whose health and strength it increases in proportion to its duration.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, Blessed John of Avila said: "Great care should be taken of the time that follows Communion, because it is a time favourable for acquiring treasures of grace."

"The time that follows Holy Communion," says St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, "is the most precious in this life. It is the most opportune moment for treating with God, and for inflaming our heart with His holy love. Then we have need neither of masters nor books, for Jesus Christ teaches us Himself how we ought to love Him," St. Teresa also says: "After Communion, let us not lose an occasion so favourable to negotiate. . . . God is not accustomed to paying in a niggardly way the sojourn that He has made in the stopping-place of our heart after He has received a good reception therein." In another place of her writings, the same saint assures us that "Jesus Christ after Communion resides in our soul as upon a throne of graces, and that He seems then to say as to the blind man, '*Quid tibi vis faciam.*—What wilt thou that I do to thee?'"<sup>2</sup> "Beloved soul, tell Me now what you want, since I have come expressly to grant whatever favours you ask of Me."<sup>3</sup>

I have said that thanksgiving is not only highly beneficial, but also *highly proper*. Take, for example, some one who receives in his house a friend come to do him good, with no thought of personal interest. What would you think of the *impropriety* of that person if you

<sup>1</sup> S. Alphonsus, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, ch. XVIII., sec. 3, n. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Mark X. 51.

<sup>3</sup> S. Alphonsus, *ibid.*



saw him leaving the house instead of remaining home to entertain his friend and benefactor?

Again, it was Jesus Christ Himself who willed to give us the example of thanksgiving after Holy Communion. After having consecrated His Body and His Blood at the Last Supper, He communicated Himself first,<sup>1</sup> then He communicated His Blessed Mother<sup>2</sup> and His Apostles; lastly, He gave thanksgiving,<sup>3</sup> and later prayed a long time.<sup>4</sup>

In imitation of her Spouse, the Holy Church constantly gives us the same example. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, after the priest has communicated the assistants, he renders thanks for himself and for them, first in secret,<sup>5</sup> then aloud when reading the *Oremus* called the *Post-communion*.<sup>6</sup> St. Augustine, also, says: "After participating in so august a Sacrament, all is finished by the act of thanksgiving."<sup>7</sup>

But this thanksgiving, so *beneficial* and so proper, must it be made in the church? Yes, when that is possible, the church being indeed the house of prayer.<sup>8</sup> St. Alphonsus advises: "If you are not constrained to do something else to fulfil a duty of obedience or charity, try to entertain yourself with Jesus Christ at least half an hour."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Thom. III.a P., q. LXXXI., art. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Sister Mary of Jesus, *The Mystical City of God*, II.e P, Bk. VI., 1197.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew XXVI. 30.

<sup>4</sup> John VII.

<sup>5</sup> When, after taking the Precious Blood, he recites the prayer, *Quod ore sumpsimus*.

<sup>6</sup> S. Thom. III.a P. q. LXXXIII. art. 4.—Card. Bona, *Rerum liturg.*, lib. II. cap. XX., n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Epist. 59. *Ad Paul*.

<sup>8</sup> Mark XI. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, *ibid*.



He adds: "Do not fail, then, to produce acts of welcome, thanksgiving, love, contrition, self-offering, and an oblation of all that belongs to you. But, above all, occupy yourself in asking favours from our Lord, especially perseverance and His holy love."

Beg Him, I add in my turn, not only for yourself, but still more for the whole world, taking care not to forget in this precious time the poor souls in purgatory.

"In fine," says St. Alphonsus again, "if your mind is dry and distracted, make use of some book that will suggest to you devout affections toward God."<sup>1</sup>

When the obligations of your state or some urgent business affair prevents your remaining in church, then Jesus will consent to your "remaining an instant recollected in prayer with all possible devotion, not turning your eyes from side to side, not reading the prayers in book, but thanking Him for so great a benefit—that of having given Himself entirely to you in Holy Communion and of having suffered for you, for we celebrate and receive this Mystery in memory of His sacred Passion."<sup>2</sup> And when, having thus entertained yourself with your sweet Jesus a very little while, His will is that you go to your necessary occupations, do so as far as you can in silence and recollection, frequently

<sup>1</sup> S. Alphonsus, *ibid.*—Have, above all, recourse to the Fourth Book of the *Imitation of Christ*, "this work so useful, known and used throughout the whole Church, and translated into every language." (Card. Bellarmin, lib. *De scriptoribus eccl.*)—We may recommend also, the second volume of Père Eymard, entitled *La Sainte Communion*.

<sup>2</sup> Rit. Rom. tit. IV., cap. I. *De Sanctissimo Eucharistiae Sacramento*: "qua par est devotione, aliquantisper in oratione permanant, gratias agentes."

recalling with gratitude the Divine Gift His most loving Heart has made you.<sup>1</sup>

## 3. *Might I not give scandal by not making my preparation and thanksgiving for Communion in church?*

You say to me, Christian soul, that by preparing for Holy Communion and making the thanksgiving in the way I have taught you in the preceding paragraphs, you might, indeed, when time failed, arrive at the church already recollected, make an act of profound adoration to Jesus Eucharistic, and even receive Him at once; then, having Him still in your breast, after a short word with Him, return to your occupations.

But you add: "Would I not give scandal by acting thus?"

No, Christian soul, for thereby you would be guilty of giving to no one any occasion for scandal. Our modern Pharisees alone could find matter therein for scandal. But as Our Lord Jesus Christ, when dying on the Cross, a Victim for us all, made no account of pharasaical scandal, so you ought not to allow yourself to be restrained by this scandal, and so give up receiving the "Bread of Life,"<sup>2</sup> under pretext that you cannot communicate, because it is necessary to remain in church for the preparation and the thanksgiving.

I have said to you that only our modern Pharisees could find therein matter of scandal. For, unless of their number, how could one be scandalised at seeing a

<sup>1</sup> See in the popular little work: *Pourquoi ne communiez-vous pas tout les matins ou vous allez a la Messe?* a short, simple and practical method for preparation, for assisting at Mass, and for Thanksgiving.

<sup>2</sup> John VI. 48.

person who, *in the impossibility of doing otherwise*, just arrived at church, present himself respectfully and devoutly to receive the consecrated Host ; then, having received, remain some time humbly prostrate in prayer, and go to fulfil the duties of his state and discharge the urgent labours of his condition ?

And who would he be that would act in this manner ? Some poor labourer, obliged to earn the daily bread for his family by the sweat of his brow ; a married woman who owes obedience to her husband ; the mother of a family whose little ones are awaiting her return ; a young girl under the care of her parents ; or, in fine, a servant who cannot neglect his duties. And, think you that they who see such a one are ignorant of his situation ? At all events, they ought to suppose it !

Do you know, Christian soul, what would with good reason disedify and give real scandal ? It would be, for instance, to see a priest indulging in the sacristy in useless and frivolous discourse before and after the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, instead of preparing devoutly in the church itself, and afterward piously making his thanksgiving therein. Or, again, you would not edify if, on going to church or during the little time you spend there or when returning to your home, some moments after having communicated, you should begin to converse with a companion, above all should you intersperse your conversation with fault-finding, tittle-tattle, detraction, etc. But just as a priest, far from giving scandal always edifies and gives good example even without remaining in the holy place neither before nor after devoutly celebrating the Holy Sacrifice, if he is called to the sick or by some other duty of his ministry ; so you, instead of scandalising, would give similar edification and good example if, not being able on

account of other urgent duties to remain a certain time in the church, you were seen going and coming in recollection and silence, I have said that, instead of scandalising, you would give edification and good example : You would, on the one hand, show how much you love your Saviour Jesus, not wishing to be a single day without receiving Him ; and on the other, you would prove how much you feared offending Him in anything whatever, as you would do, without doubt, were you to tarry longer in the holy place before or after Holy Communion, to the neglect of your essential duties. O thrice blessed the soul that will imitate you !

## The Duties of One's State.

1. *I do not communicate often, nor every day, because I fear failing in the duties of my state.*

I reply, Christian soul, that if, in order to communicate often or every day, it would be necessary to fail, even lightly, in some one of the duties of your state, I should be the first to say to you : Let alone daily Communion and attend to your essential obligations. The reason is evident : frequent and daily Communion is the object of a *desire* and not a *commandment* of our Lord Jesus Christ, while, on the contrary, He *commands* you to discharge the duties of your state. To fail therein, even lightly, in order to communicate, would constitute a venial sin, and would displease the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

You do not say, however, that you omit frequent and daily Communion, because you *fail* in the duties of your state, but only because you *fear* failing in them. May not this be a *vain fear* ? Is it that you fear by communicating daily you would contradict your parents, your husband, your masters ? And may it not be that they are provoked, *without reason* ? that they are provoked not because the time you spend in the church for Communion deters you from your family duties, but because, loving our Lord little themselves, they do not wish you to receive Him so often ? In this case, would it be proper to gratify them ? or would it not be better to satisfy



our Lord, who is so desirous of giving Himself to you every day?

You see, Christian soul, there is here question of a point absolutely practical and very obscure and delicate; for this fear may be *vain*, consequently, to be despised. But it may also be *just* and *reasonable*. How dispose of this question? I cannot do it here in writing. It must be studied with the various special circumstances that attend it, and which are unknown to me. You have only one means of assuring yourself whether this fear is *vain* or *reasonable*. Take the advice of a pious, learned, and experienced confessor, and receive his decision with docility.

If he tells you that your fear is *vain*, that is, that you fail in none of your duties by communicating daily, then, believe me, despise that fear and go quietly to Communion every day. He may judge, on the contrary, that you cannot practice daily Communion without neglecting your duties, especially those that bind the mother of a family to her children, when, for example, the mother's absence might expose them to some danger to soul or body. In that case, communicate only when you have the leisure for doing so, submitting humbly to the judgment of your confessor. Acquiesce, also, calmly and resignedly to the sweet will of God, which, He being the Supreme Being, ought to be preferred to all other good things, even to Sacramental Communion.

## 2. Of Spiritual Communion.

In the preceding paragraph I told you, Christian soul, that the will of God, who is the Supreme Being, ought to be preferred even to Sacramental Communion, because the will of God is God Himself, who, by means

of your duties, of some corporeal infirmity, or of any other reasonable motive, gives you to understand that He does not wish you on such or such a day to receive Him sacramentally in the Divine Eucharist. If, then, Christian soul, you abstain from Communion, acquiescing joyously and resignedly in the good divine pleasure, you are very pleasing to your sweet Saviour. Leaving freely God for God, you acquire very great merit, and He, to recompense your sacrifice, will give Himself to you in another way, that is, by spiritual Communion.

This spiritual Communion consists in a lively desire of receiving Jesus Christ in the adorable Eucharist. It is very easy, and may be made always and everywhere.

It is *very easy*, for to communicate spiritually a sigh, an ejaculatory prayer, is sufficient; as, for example, "*Come, my Divine Jesus, come to me! . . . Come, my heart desires Thee ardently!*"

This may be done at any moment and in any place. It is lawful to communicate but once a day, when fasting, and in a state of grace. On the contrary, it is always permitted to communicate spiritually, a hundred and a thousand times a day, after having taken our refecton, and even if we have had the misfortune of having fallen into some grievous sin, provided only that we have had a contrite and humble heart.

Lastly, to communicate spiritually, there is no necessity of going to a church; but in every place, in the house, in the fields, in the workshop, *everywhere*, it is permitted you to receive spiritually your sweet Jesus.

O how precious is Communion, even spiritual Communion! Of this you may judge from these words of St. Leonard of Port Maurice: "O blessed spiritual Communion, hidden treasure, but so little known! To show us how pleasing to Him is this manner of Commu-

nion, Our Lord has willed, often by evident miracles, to hear the desires of His servants by communicating them with His own hands, as happened to St. Clare of Montefalco, to St. Catherine of Sienna, to St. Lidwina; or again by the ministry of the angels, as to the Seraphic Doctor St. Bonaventure, and to two holy Bishops, Honorius and Firmin; or again, by the hands of the most Blessed Virgin, as to St. Sylvester. You must not be astonished at this tenderness on the part of God; for spiritual communion inflames the heart with the love of God, unites it to Him, and disposes it to receive the most signal favours. Several doctors hesitate not to say that a soul may sometimes make spiritual Communion with so much fervour as to receive even the same grace as in sacramental Communion. Let me, then, repeat: O blessed spiritual Communion! How precious, but how little known, and above all, how little practised by the Christians of our day!"<sup>1</sup>

Although for spiritual Communion, a sigh, an elevation of the heart suffices, yet, Christian soul, if you wish to increase your devotion, and thereby reap more fruit from it, withdraw into a retired place, kneel down, join your hands, turn your eyes towards the nearest church, in which is the sacred tabernacle, "make an act of *faith* in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; an act of *love*, joining thereto sorrow for your sins; then an act of *desire*, inviting Jesus to come to you, to take possession of your whole being. Say to Him for instance: "*I believe, my Jesus, that Thou art living in the Blessed Sacrament! . . . I love Thee with all my*

<sup>1</sup> S. Leonard of P. M., *Conferences in honour of the Most Blessed Sacrament*. Conference 12.

*heart . . . I am sincerely sorry for having offended Thee ! Come to my soul which desires Thee !*"<sup>1</sup>

Would you still more excite your piety, "imagine that the Blessed Virgin or one of your holy patrons presents you the Sacred Host. Fancy yourself receiving It, and repeat several times these words dictated by love : *Come, O my Jesus, come into my poor heart ! Come, satiate my desires ! Come, sanctify me ! Come, O my Jesus, Come !* . . . Then remain in silence. Look upon God within you and, as if you had communicated in reality, adore Him, thank Him,"<sup>2</sup> "and say to Him with all the warmth of your love : *I press Thee to my heart, O my Well-Beloved, and I give myself entirely to Thee ! Never permit me to be separated from Thee !*"<sup>3</sup>

But take care, Christian soul, never to omit sacramental Communion when you can possibly make It ; for in this case, if you are satisfied with communicating spiritually, your desire would be *vain*. Just as the desire of food would be vain in one that would not eat although he might easily do so, having before him a table well provided.

<sup>1</sup> S. Alphonsus. *The Spouse of Jesus Christ*, ch. XVIII., sec. 3, No. 8

<sup>2</sup> S. Leonard of P. M., Ent. 12.

<sup>3</sup> S. Alphonsus, *ibid.*

## A Last Word to the Christian Soul.

With the help of divine grace, behold me at the end of my task.

In spite of its modest size, I acknowledge to you that this little book has given me much trouble. First, on account of the numerous quotations which I have inserted in it, and which may, perhaps, present some inexactitude of form, but not of sense. Again, because I have had to compose it by utilizing every moment of the short leisure left me by the incessant fatigues of my sacerdotal ministry.

I am now, Christian soul, confident that my labour has banished from your mind all *prejudices*, and from your heart all *vain fears*. You are burning with love for your Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and, desirous of pleasing Him more and more, you have taken the resolution to receive Him every day, or at least every time that you are able to assist at the Holy Sacrifice. I conjure you, during those instants of Paradise, in which your God is really in you and you in Him, pray fervently for me and for all priests, especially for confessors, pastors, missionaries, that enlightened and animated by the Holy Spirit, all, with heart, mind, tongue, action, may labour with ardour to procure the greater glory of God in the Eucharist. May we all be attentive to call the attention of the Faithful to Its marvellous effects both as a Sacrifice and as a Sacrament! May we also, according to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, be unanimous in proclaiming always and on every occasion,



from the altar, from the pulpit, in the confessional, as well as in private conversations, that, although it is proper to communicate with all the love and reverence possible, "in presence of so great majesty and of love so excellent, which led Our Lord Jesus Christ to give His life for our salvation and His Flesh for our nourishment."<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, to communicate worthily, even every day, it is sufficient to be in a state of grace, that is, it suffices *not to be certain* of having committed a grievous sin since our last confession.<sup>2</sup> Still more, let us say that, in order not to commit a fault, even venial, of irreverence toward the Blessed Sacrament, and consequently to receive the full effect of It every time that we communicate, were it every day, it is only requisite, besides the state of grace, to approach the Holy Table *devoutly*. We approach *devoutly* when we go without voluntary distraction, thinking only of Jesus at the solemn and precious moment in which we received Him in the consecrated Host.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we shall behold the Faithful pressing more numerous around the altar of the Holy Sacrifice, even

<sup>1</sup> Council of Trent, Sess. XII., cap. VIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, cap. VII.—Cf. p. 23, 29, 53.

<sup>3</sup> S. Thom., P. III., q. LXXIX., art. 4 —It must be remarked here that the dispositions required of religious in order to be judged worthy of communicating *more frequently* than the days assigned by their Rule, and even *every day* (shining purity, ardent charity—Innocent XI.: Decree *Cum ad aures*) (fervour and spiritual profit—Decree *Quomadmodum*) are reduced to the state of *grace* and *actual devotion*. The soul in grace habitually shines with purity; the soul that communicates with actual devotion possesses the brilliancy of purity, even actual; she shines with charity and fervour, for she bears in herself the fire of charity, not only as a habit, but also as an act. The spiritual profit of Holy Communion always follows in consequence, since such a soul always *fully* receives Its effects. See my notes on page 62 and onwards.

on days that are not of obligation. And, again, all the assistants, who feel that they are not guilty of mortal sin, who are not prevented by legitimate motives, will give a magnificent spectacle of Christian fraternity and social equality; when patrician and workman, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, together approach the Divine Banquet. The ardent desire of the Church, expressed by the Holy Council of Trent, and renewed by Pius X., will then be realised. She will no longer be forced to groan over the small number of her sons who, assisting at Holy Mass, communicate thereat, not only not spiritually, but still less sacramentally.

Then this tender Mother will thrill with joy on seeing renewed the happy days when the celebrant, "after having communicated himself, turned towards the Faithful" (without allowing himself to be arrested by vain fears of imaginary imprudence which some priests of our day might, perhaps, experience at the idea of doing the same) and invite them to the Holy Table with the words: "*Come, my brethren, to Communion.*"<sup>1</sup> And all who were prepared (that is, all who had no consciousness of mortal sin and were recollected) would receive with the greatest devotion the most holy Mystery of the Body and the Blood of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Catch. Rom., p. II., cap. IV., n. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*—Is it, perhaps, that good Christians would not hearken to the call, a great number, at least, of those that habitually live in the grace of God, if, when they assist at Holy Mass, their pastors should often invite them by urgent and opportune exhortations to communicate every day? See on this subject the recommendation of the Roman Catechism (Pt. II., ch. I., n. 60) and the recent decree of Pius X.

Some pastors (as ye know only too well) refrain from recommending daily Communion to the Faithful, perhaps because they fear the abuse of It. I ask: Why do you not rather fear to fail in your duty by not recommending it, since this duty has been

And when, Christian soul, this so-desired time will come, which you should hasten by your ardent prayers in every one of your Communions, then by the perfecting

imposed on you : first, by the Roman Catechism, drawn up expressly for you by order of the Council of Trent, and published by command of St. Pius V.; secondly, by the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, *Christianorum populum ad hunc tam pium ac tam salutarem usum crebis admonitionibus multoque studio cohortentur?*

And then what abuse *do you fear?* Perhaps, *grave* sacrileges? Then why exhort the Faithful to confess so often, when ye know beyond doubt, above all we missionaries, that many confessions are sacrilegious, either through want of necessary contrition, or because of the malicious suppression in confession of certain mortal sins? Why exhort them to make Paschal Communion according to the precept of the Church? Is it not in the Paschal time, as we know by experience, that so many sacrilegious Communions are made? Do you not see yourselves that we cannot cease to recommend the use of holy things on account of the fear that they will be abused? Lastly, who are they who generally *abuse* this Divine Sacrament? Is it souls given to frequent Communion? Experience has taught me that it is not so. During almost thirty years of missions, while hearing so many general confessions, I have had, alas! too often to deplore the numerous Communions gravely sacrilegious, but always by those who communicated only once a year or very rarely. On the contrary, in persons who communicated often and daily, I have always been able to touch, so to speak, with the finger the advantages of frequent and daily Communion, among which is that of being preserved from accursed mortal sin, especially in youth. Still more, among these same persons, in what concerns unworthy Communions, in a great length of time, I have found almost none.

Perhaps you fear that the Faithful may approach the Holy Table *without devotion*, that is, with *voluntary* distractions and thus commit a venial sin of light sacrilege. But, again, of the light sacrileges, I have encountered very few. I have, on the contrary, almost always remarked in souls that practice frequent and daily Communion, an excessive fear of communicating badly. And these light sacrileges will happen very rarely if, when we exhort the Faithful exempt from mortal sin to frequent and daily Communion, we endeavour zealously to inculcate : first never to communicate through vanity, routine, desire to please superiors, or for any other worldly intention ; but always to receive the Divine Eucharist to procure the glory of God and the good of their own soul : secondly, to consider carefully that, if Communions made with *devotion* and without *voluntary* distraction are the smile of

virtue of this Sacrament,<sup>1</sup> will be realized the wish uttered by the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII.: "May (and it is our most earnest desire) the Eucharist produce daily fruits more abundant by a blessed increase of faith, hope, charity, and all the Christian virtues!"<sup>2</sup> Then the restorative power<sup>3</sup> of the Eucharist will perfect the work to which alone the reigning Pontiff Pius X. aspires, that all things may be re-established in Christ,<sup>4</sup> that Christ may be all and in all."<sup>5</sup>

Lastly, since the strength infused by the Divine Eucharist is also preservative,<sup>7</sup> it will come to pass that all Catholics nourishing in themselves the life of grace by the frequent and daily use of the Eucharistic Bread, not only will Christ be in all, but in all He will abide, according to His word: "He that eateth *My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him.*"<sup>8</sup>

Jesus, inflaming the ardour of charity, and always more or less remitting the punishment of past sins, Communions made with *voluntary* distractions, on the contrary, although they do, indeed, increase sanctifying grace, yet they do not excite actual charity. They leave the soul without fervour, and they remit nothing of past sins. But where would we find the soul who, communicating with a *good intention*, would desire afterward to be distracted at the very moment of receiving the Divine Eucharist?

<sup>1</sup> S. Denys. Areop., *De eccl. hierar.*, cap. II.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclique *Mirae caritatis*.

<sup>3</sup> S. Thom., III. a P., Q. LXXIX., art. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Lett. Encycl. *E. supremi Apostolatus*.

<sup>5</sup> Ephes. I. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Coloss. III., II.

<sup>7</sup> Council of Trent, Sess. XIII., cap. II.—See also S. Thom. IIIa. Part. q. LXXIX. art. 6.

<sup>8</sup> John VI. 57.



## Pope Pius X. on Daily Communion.

In a Decree published on June 3rd, 1905, the Holy Father manifests his "great desire that Daily Communion may be, by the grace of God, propagated everywhere amongst the Christian people"; and for this purpose grants an indulgence of 300 days for the daily recital of the following prayer (with a plenary indulgence once a month for all who are faithful to the daily recital):—

"O Most Sweet Jesus, Who hast come into the world to give to all souls the life of Thy grace; and Who, to preserve and increase it in them, hast willed to be the daily remedy of their infirmity and their food for each day, we humbly beseech Thee by Thy Heart so burning with love for us, to pour Thy Divine Spirit upon all souls, in order that those who have the misfortune to be in the state of mortal sin, may, returning to Thee, find the life of grace which they have lost; and that those who are already living by this Divine life may approach devoutly Thy Divine Table every day when it is possible; so that receiving each day in Holy Communion the antidote of their daily venial sins, and each day sustaining in themselves the life of Thy Grace, and thus purifying themselves always the more, they may finally come to a happy life with Thee. Amen."

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**GULIELMUS, *Archiepiscopus Dublinensis.***



# Decree

*Of the Sacred Congregation of the Council*

**On receiving Daily the Most Holy Eucharist.**

*(Official Translation.)*

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT having in view the unspeakable treasures of grace which are offered to the faithful who receive the Most Holy Eucharist, makes the following declaration: "The holy Synod would desire that at every Mass the faithful who are present should communicate not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but sacramentally, by the actual reception of the Eucharist" (*Sess. 22, cap. 6*). Which words declare plainly enough the wish of the Church that all Christians should be daily nourished by this heavenly banquet, and should derive therefrom abundant fruit for their sanctification.

And this wish of the Council is in entire agreement with that desire wherewith Christ our Lord was inflamed when He instituted this divine Sacrament. For He Himself more than once, and in no ambiguous terms, pointed out the need of often eating His flesh and drinking His blood, especially in these words: "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (*John vi. 59*). Now, from this comparison of the food of angels with bread and with the manna, it was easily to be understood by His dis-

principles that, as the body is daily nourished with bread, and as the Hebrews were daily nourished with manna in the desert, so the Christian soul might daily partake of this heavenly bread and be refreshed thereby. Moreover, whereas, in the Lord's Prayer, we are bidden to ask for "our daily bread," the holy Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that by these words must be understood, not so much that material bread which is the support of the body, as the Eucharistic bread which ought to be our daily food.

Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet is directed chiefly to this end, that the faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable ; so that its primary purpose is not that the honour and reverence due to our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients (*S. Augustine, Serm. 57 in Matth., de Orat. Dom., n. 7*). Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins" (*Sess. 13, cap. 2*).

This desire on the part of God was so well understood by the first Christians, that they daily flocked to the holy table as to a source of life and strength. "They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread" (*Acts ii. 42*). And that this practice was continued into later ages, not without great fruit of holiness and perfection, the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers bear witness.

But when in later times piety grew cold, and more

especially under the influence of the plague of Jansenism, disputes began to arise concerning the dispositions with which it was proper to receive Communion frequently or daily ; and writers vied with one another in imposing more and more stringent conditions as necessary to be fulfilled. The result of such disputes was that very few were considered worthy to communicate daily, and to derive from this most healing Sacrament its more abundant fruits ; the rest being content to partake of it once a year, or once a month, or at the utmost weekly. Nay, to such a pitch was rigorism carried, that whole classes of persons were excluded from a frequent approach to the holy table ; for instance, those who were engaged in trade, or even *those who were living in the state of matrimony.*

Others, however, went to the opposite extreme. Under the persuasion that daily Communion was a divine precept, and in order that no day might pass without the reception of the Sacrament, besides other practices contrary to the approved usage of the Church, they held that the Holy Eucharist ought to be received, and in fact administered it, even on Good Friday.

Under these circumstances the Holy See did not fail in its duty of vigilance. For by a decree of this Sacred Congregation, which begins with the words *Cum ad aures*, issued on the 12th February, A.D. 1679, with the approbation of Innocent XI., it condemned these errors, and put a stop to such abuses ; at the same time declaring that all the faithful of whatsoever class, merchants or tradesmen or married persons not excepted, might be admitted to frequent Communion, according to the devotion of each one and the judgment of his confessor. And on the 7th December, 1690, by the decree of Pope Alexander VIII., *Sanctissimus Dominus*, the proposition

of Baius, postulating a perfectly pure love of God, without any admixture of defect, as requisite on the part of those who wished to approach the holy table, was condemned.

Yet the poison of Jansenism, which, under the pretext of showing due honour and reverence to the Holy Eucharist, had infected the minds even of good men, did not entirely disappear. The controversy as to the dispositions requisite for the lawful and laudable frequentation of the Sacrament survived the declarations of the Holy See; so much so, indeed, that certain theologians of good repute judged that daily Communion should be allowed to the faithful only in rare cases, and under many conditions.

On the other hand there was not wanting men of learning and piety who more readily granted permission for this practice, so salutary and so pleasing to God. In accordance with the teaching of the Fathers, they maintained that there was no precept of the Church which prescribed more perfect dispositions in the case of daily than of weekly or monthly Communion; while the good effects of daily Communion, would, they alleged, be far more abundant than those of Communion received weekly or monthly.

In our own day the controversy has been carried on with increased warmth, and not without bitterness, so that the minds of confessors and the consciences of the faithful have been disturbed, to the no small detriment of Christian piety and devotion. Accordingly, certain<sup>4</sup> distinguished men, themselves Pastors of souls, have urgently besought His Holiness Pope Pius X. to deign to settle, by his supreme authority, the question concerning the dispositions requisite for daily Communion; so that this usage, so salutary and so pleasing to God,



might not only suffer no decrease among the faithful, but might rather be promoted and everywhere propagated; a thing most desirable in these days; when religion and the Catholic Faith are attacked on all sides, and the true love of God and genuine piety are so lacking in many quarters. And His Holiness, being most earnestly desirous, out of his abundant solicitude and zeal, that the faithful should be invited to partake of the sacred banquet as often as possible, and even daily, and should profit to the utmost by its fruits, committed the aforesaid question to this Sacred Congregation, to be looked into and decided once for all (*definiendum*).

Accordingly, the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a plenary Session held on the 16th December, 1905, submitted the whole matter to a very careful scrutiny; and, after sedulously examining the reasons adduced on either side, determined and declared as follows:—

1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the holy table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

2. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

3. Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully



## Decree on Daily Communion.

deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning in future ; and, if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins, and from all affection thereto.

4. But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better ; therefore, care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties.

5. That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, **are to be careful** not to dissuade any one (*ne quemquam avertant*) from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace, and approaches with a right intention.

6. But since it is plain that, by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist, union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors, and preachers—in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism (*Part ii. cap. 4, n. 60*)—are frequently, and with great zeal, to exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

7. Frequent and daily Communion is to be promoted especially in religious Orders and Congregations of all kinds ; with regard to which, however, the decree *Quemadmodum*, issued on the 17th December, 1890, by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, is to remain in force. It is also to be promoted especially in ecclesiastical seminaries, where students are preparing for the service of the altar ; as also in all Christian establishments, of whatever kind, for the training of youth.

8. In the case of religious institutes, whether of solemn or religious vows, in whose rules, or constitutions, or calendars Communion is assigned to certain fixed days, such regulations are to be regarded as *directive and not preceptive*. In such cases the appointed number of Communions should be regarded as a minimum, and not as setting a limit to the devotion of the religious. Therefore, freedom of access to the Eucharistic table, whether more frequently or daily, must always be allowed them, according to the principles above laid down in this decree. And in order that all religious of both sexes may clearly understand the provisions of this decree, the Superior of each house is to see that it is read in community, in the vernacular, every year within the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

9. Finally, after the publication of this decree, all ecclesiastical writers are to cease from contentious controversies concerning the dispositions requisite for frequent and daily Communion.

All this having been reported to His Holiness Pope Pius X. by the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred

Congregation in an audience held on the 17th December, 1905. His Holiness ratified and confirmed the present decree, and ordered it to be published, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. He further ordered that it should be sent to all local Ordinaries and Regular Prelates, to be communicated by them to their respective seminaries, parishes, religious institutes, and priests; and that in their reports concerning the state of their respective dioceses or institutes, they should inform the Holy See concerning the execution of the matters therein determined.

*Given at Rome, the 20th day of December, 1905.*

✠ VINCENT, CARD. BISHOP OF PALESTRINA, *Prefect*,  
CAJETAN DE LAI, *Secretary*.

L. ✠ S.

## Decree

**By which Daily Communicants may gain  
all Indulgences, without being obliged  
to Confess weekly.**

His Holiness Pope Pius X. most earnestly desires that the praiseworthy custom, so very acceptable to God, by which the faithful, in a state of grace and with a right intention, approach daily to Holy Communion, may become more general and may lead to more virtuous lives. For which reason, graciously and gladly receiving the petitions of many persons addressed to him through the Most Eminent Cardinal Casimir Genari, he has justly determined to grant a special favour to all those who follow or desire to follow the practice aforesaid.

Pope Clement XIII., of happy memory, by a decree of this Sacred Congregation of the 9th day of December, 1763, granted to all the faithful, "who, striving to purify their souls by frequent confession of their sins, were accustomed, unless they were legitimately hindered, to approach the Sacrament of Penance at least once a week, and were not conscious of having committed any mortal sin since their last confession, the privilege of gaining all Indulgences whatsoever, without the actual confession which otherwise would be necessary for gaining them : this concession, however, being in no wise applicable to the Indulgences of a Jubilee, whether

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ordinary or extraordinary, or to other Indulgences granted in like manner ; for which, besides the other works enjoined, sacramental confession must be made within the time prescribed." Now, however, to all the faithful who, being in a state of grace and having a right and devout intention, are accustomed daily to receive the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, even if they once or twice in a week omit their daily Communion, Our Most Holy Father Pius X. grants that they may avail themselves of the above-mentioned Indult of Clement XIII., of happy memory, without the weekly confession which in other circumstances is still of obligation for rightly gaining the Indulgences that occur during the week. His Holiness, moreover, has graciously declared that this privilege will hold good in future times. Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

*Given at Rome, the 14th day of February, 1906.*

A. CARD, TRIPEPI, *Prefect.*

✠ D. PANICI, Archbishop of Laodicea, *Secretary.*

L. ✠ S.

The present rescript has been shown at the Secretariate of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics. In testimony whereof, etc.

*Given at Rome, at the aforesaid Secretariate, the 16th day of February, 1906.*

JOSEPH M. CANON COSELLI, *Substitute.*



# Devotions in the Octave of Corpus Christi.

For the continuance and daily increase of the abundant fruit produced by the Decree of December 20th, 1905, on *Daily Communion*, Our Holy Father, Pope Pius X., by a letter of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences of the 10th of April, 1907, to the Bishops of the Catholic Church, has expressed his wish to have, as far as may be possible, the following annual observances :—

## In Cathedral Churches.

That on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, either immediately after the Festival of Corpus Christi, or (if the circumstances of persons or places so require) at some other time of the year to be fixed by the Bishop, there shall be in every Cathedral Church three days' prayer, as here described : namely—

I.—That, *on each day*, there shall be a sermon on the great excellence of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and on the dispositions required for worthily receiving it. That, after the sermon, the Blessed Sacrament shall be exposed ; and during the Exposition the prayer “ *O most Sweet Jesus* ” (see page 88) shall be recited, to be followed on the Sunday by the *Te Deum*. That the *Tantum ergo* shall then be sung, and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament be given.

II.—That, *on the Sunday*, the last of the three days, there shall be, at the usual parochial Mass, a homily by the Parish Priest on the gospel of the Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi—or, if the Sunday be not within the octave, a sermon in preparation for a fervent Communion ; and at this parochial Mass the faithful shall communicate. That, on this Sunday afternoon (or

## 100 Devotions in Octave of Corpus Christi.

evening), there shall be the same service as on the two preceding days. And in the sermon the preacher shall exhort the faithful to more fervent piety towards the Most Holy Sacrament, and especially to a more frequent participation of this heavenly banquet, in accordance with the approved teaching of the *Catechismus Romanus* (see n. vi. of the Decree of December 20th, 1905). Moreover, at Benediction (as is said above) the *Tantum ergo* will be preceded by the *Te Deum*.

### In Parish Churches.

His Holiness earnestly recommends that also in Parish Churches, according as each Bishop in his prudence and discernment shall judge fit, there shall be at least those pious exercises which are above described for the Cathedral Churches for the Sunday within the octave, or some other Sunday in the year.

*May, 1907.*

### Indulgences Granted.

That the faithful may more eagerly take part in the aforesaid pious exercises, His Holiness has been pleased to grant the following Indulgences, applicable also to the Souls in Purgatory :—

1.—An Indulgence of *seven years* and *seven quarantines* for each of the three days' prayer.

2.—A *Plenary* Indulgence to be gained once during the three days, or any day thereof, by those who devoutly assist at the devotions of any one day, and after Confession and Holy Communion pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

3.—A *Plenary* Indulgence to be gained on the Sunday by all who, after Confession, receive Holy Communion together in a Cathedral or a Parish Church, and pray for the Holy Father's intentions.

Holy Communion in the case of Children who have just received It for the first time and in that of sick people afflicted with some chronic disease and unable to keep the Eucharistic fast.

On the 20th day of December, 1905, His Holiness our Most Holy Father Pope Pius X., after consulting with this Sacr. Cong., published a Decree "concerning the daily reception of the Most Holy Eucharist," in which "all Faithful of whatever rank or condition" are most urgently exhorted "to frequent and daily Communion, as most conformable to the wishes of Christ our Lord and of the Catholic Church, so that no one can licitly be excluded from It who is in the state of grace and approaches the Holy Table with a truly pious intention."

Besides, in the same document, n. 7, it is decreed: "that frequent and daily Communion should be encouraged, especially in religious institutions of whatever kind . . . above all in ecclesiastical Seminaries, where the students are preparing for the service of the altar, and likewise in all other institutions for the education of Christian youths (*christianis ephebeis*).

Nay, more in order to propagate everywhere and more and more effectively the custom of daily Communion so desirable and most pleasing to God, and in order that It may yield more abundant fruits, His Holiness, on the third day of June, 1905, not only granted indulgences to all the faithful who devoutly recite the prayer for the propagation of the pious custom of daily Communion (page 88), but also in a Decree "Urbis et Orbis" of the 14th day of February, 1906, published by the Sacr. Cong.

## Holy Communion.

of Indulgences and Holy Relics, kindly conceded that all indulgences could be gained by daily Communion, without the condition of weekly confession.

Numberless letters addressed to the Holy See by Bishops and Superiors of Religious Orders, as well as many articles in periodicals commenting upon the Decree of the 20th of December, 1905, show with what reverential submission the dispositions and declarations of the Holy See in this matter were received by all and with what joy they were welcomed by very many.

But at the same time doubts and petitions were addressed to the S. C., among which two especially deserve a particular attention. They concern : the one, children who have just received their first Holy Communion ; the other, those who are ill of a lingering disease and desire to be strengthened by the Eucharistic Bread repeatedly, but are not able to keep in its fulness the natural fast.

Hence, the Most Holy Father was requested to deign to solve the two following doubts :

DOUBT I. *Should all the students of Catholic Schools, even those children who have just received their first Holy Communion, be encouraged to approach the Holy Table every day.*

DOUBT II. *May not the sick afflicted with a tedious disease and who cannot strictly keep the Eucharistic fast be granted some privilege, so as not to be deprived for so long a period of the Eucharistic Bread?*

His Holiness, having entrusted the Sacred Congregation of the Council with the examination of this matter, the latter, all things being carefully considered, on the 15th day of December, 1906, resolved and decreed :

TO THE FIRST DOUBT. *That the frequent reception of Holy Communion is recommended according to the first*

*Decree* (On daily receiving the Most Holy Eucharist, 20th of Dec., 1905) *even to children who have been once admitted to the Holy Table conformably to the directions contained in the Roman Catechism, ch. 4, n. 63; that they must not be prevented from receiving it frequently, but, on the contrary, must be exhorted to do so, the contrary practice obtaining in some places being hereby condemned.*

TO THE SECOND DOUBT. *Conformably to the mind (of the petitioner) after consulting with the Most Holy Father.*

The Holy Father has graciously allowed to those who have been lying sick for a month and have no certain hope of speedy recovery that, on the advice of their confessor, even after taking something in the form of a drink (*per modum potus*), they may receive *Holy Communion once or twice a month; whilst those who live in pious houses where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved or who have the privilege of having Mass said in a private oratory, may receive once or twice a week* (S. Cong. Council, 7th December, 1906). The Congregation of the Holy Office 7th September, 1897) gave the following explanation: "The words *per modum potus* (in the form of a drink) are to be understood as meaning that one may take soup, coffee, and other liquid foods with which some substance has been mixed, such as semolina or grated bread, provided that the mixture does not lose the nature of liquid food."

## Practical Conclusions from the First Point.

1. The only dispositions absolutely necessary to receive the Holy Communion frequently, even every day, are the state of grace and a right intention.

2. Now these dispositions are usually found especially in children who have just received their first Holy Communion, whose understanding wickedness



has not altered and whose soul has not been beguiled by deceit.

3. Wherefore frequent and daily Communion is to be recommended especially to children, for it is desirable that they should be imbued with the grace of Our Lord before passions have perverted them, and that they should be thus strengthened in innocence and piety.

4. This most salutary practice should be most especially fostered in Seminaries, monasteries of both sexes, and other pious Institutions in which even very young children are instructed and educated.

### **Practical Conclusions from the Second Point.**

1. Holy Communion may be given to those who are afflicted with a disease not mortal, but which is chronic, and to patients whose convalescence is long, although they cannot strictly keep the Eucharistic fast.

2. The food that can be administered to them, whatever be its nature, must be in liquid form.

3. In such cases, when the illness has lasted for a month and there is no appearance of prompt recovery, the patients may, upon the confessor's advice, receive the Holy Eucharist *once or twice a week*, if they live in religious houses where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, or if they enjoy the privilege of a private oratory; in other cases, they will be entitled to Holy Communion only *once or twice a month*.





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